

30 slaughtered in Algeria

PARIS (R) — Anti-government rebels slaughtered 30 people, including two babies and seven women, overnight at Chebli village in Blida province 50 kilometres south of Algiers, Algerian security officials said on Thursday. The massacre, the second in the area in just over a month, took place hours before the start of a three-week campaign for June 5 parliamentary elections. In the overnight attack in Chebli, 30 were "assassinated in a cowardly way" — the term used by the authorities when militants cut the throats of their victims. Among the 30 victims were 17 children, two babies and seven women, the security forces said in a statement reported by the official Algerian news agency APS. In the last attack on Chebli, guerrillas cut the throats and hacked to death 30 people on April 13, according to the authorities.

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U.S. aid to Jordan will be increased — Burns

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The United States is considering providing Jordan with substantial assistance as a reward for the Kingdom's peace initiatives, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said on Thursday.

"We have been doing all we can to assist all the countries in the Middle East that support the peace negotiations. We're looking for ways that we might assist those nations who are willing to take risks for peace, like Jordan," Mr. Burns told reporters in Washington.

"The President and Secretary (of State Madeleine) Albright have been seeking ways to provide substantial American economic assistance to Jordan. King Hussein has taken a genuine risk for peace, and he deserves the support of the United States. He has been a courageous leader and a visionary leader, particularly during the last six months or so in the search for peace," Mr. Burns said in a clear reference to His Majesty's efforts to remove the deadlock in the Hebron negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

He added that the U.S. is

examining ways to provide Jordan with substantial assistance and said that there has been no final decision in this regard.

Minister of Planning, Rima Khalaf, told the Jordan Times Friday that during His Majesty King Hussein's visit to Washington in April, the U.S. "implicitly" agreed to increase the U.S. aid programme to the Kingdom.

Dr. Khalaf said that Jordan "received verbal commitment from the American side to increase U.S. aid to Jordan in the coming months...but no figure was given at that time."

Mr. Burns declined to confirm last week media

reports in Tel Aviv and Washington, that the U.S. was planning to reduce its aid to Israel and Egypt, and increase it to Jordan.

"There are a number of options being debated within our government, and being discussed with countries, including Israel," Mr. Burns said.

He added that "Jordan deserves our support because of King Hussein's leadership; and we are actively trying to find ways to get that support."

The Israeli daily newspaper, Maariv, said last week that the U.S. plan would involve reducing U.S. civilian aid to Egypt and that U.S. President Bill

Clinton had enough support in Congress to carry out the cuts.

Mr. Burns said that any decision in this regard, would have to be approved by the Congress and that aid to Israel and Egypt will continue "because they are important cornerstones of our policy in the Middle East."

News reports said among the options the U.S. had is to deduct hundreds of million of dollars from the \$1,200 million non-military assistance extended to Israel. The Jewish state also receives \$1,800 million in military assistance.

Tough amendments to Press and Publications Law expected today

Deadline to sell government shares in papers expires

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government will announce long-awaited amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law today, a senior official told the Jordan Times on Friday.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi said that he expected a formal announcement of the amendments following today's Cabinet session.

The government recently indicated that it was prepared to crack down on the "yellow press" — mainly the weekly tabloids, which were often accused of lack of credibility and sensationalism.

His Majesty King Hussein was highly critical of the recent performance of the press during a speech last Wednesday to senior officers of the Jordanian Armed Forces.

The King said that rumours regarding donations from the Royal family to families of Israeli schoolgirls killed in Baqoura and that Princess Aisha had been sent to study in Israel were "intended to poison the atmosphere and create confusion."

"I believe our press should deal with this situation," he said, "because we have reached a point of deterioration even at the level of morals."

"The press is not reflecting the correct image about the country which we know. This distortion

should stop."

Although the official declined to comment on the nature of the changes, another official stated that changes "will not be profound."

Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid was recently quoted in the local press as saying that amendments to the law would "begin with official warnings to those who violate the law and end in the withdrawal of licence to publish."

Informed sources said that the amendments to the law would substantially increase financial penalties for violating the "ten commandments" of the law. Article 40 of the current law primarily prohibits publication of material offensive to the Royal family, information about the Jordanian Armed Forces and Jordan's military arsenal, articles that offend "the dignity or personal freedoms of individuals," reports or articles "offensive to public morals and ethics," reports or articles instigating crime or damaging national unity, among other offences.

The current law, a source of controversy since its implementation in 1993, subjects chief editors to a maximum fine of JD1,000 for violations. However, previous governments, in prosecuting journalists and writers, applied the penal code, often arresting journalists and trying them, under the penal code, rather than the

press law.

Editors and journalists are also expecting that new amendments may absolve the government of responsibility to reduce its equity in two Arabic daily newspapers in compliance with the Press and Publications Law.

According to the law, the government must relinquish the majority of its shares in Al Ra'i Arabic daily by today. However, Dr. Rashid has also said that there will be no changes in the "big newspapers" in terms of restructuring or capital.

The government owns shares primarily in the Jordan Press Foundation (owner of Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times) through the Social Security Corporation (SSC), which owns 46 per cent of the foundation's equity.

It owns an additional 15 per cent through the Jordan Investment Corporation, the investment arm of the government.

The press law requires that the government reduce its equity from 61 per cent to no more than 30 per cent by today.

The status of the shares late Friday was in question following an unconfirmed report that the SSC would sell 31 per cent of its equity this morning to a holding company established by the SSC in conjunction with the SSC Employee Savings Fund.

Dr. Mutawi said he could not comment on the issue.

Arafat snubs Ross and sends letter of complaint to President Clinton

When Arafat does not want to see Ross, he is saying he does not want to see the president of the United States — Abington

Combined agency dispatches

IN A parting snub, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat declined to meet U.S. Middle East point man, Dennis Ross, on the eve of his return to Washington.

Mr. Ross was on his way home Friday after coming up empty in his latest bid to breathe new life into deadlocked Israel-Palestinian National Authority (PNA) peace moves.

All Mr. Ross had to show for his nine-day mission was a meeting last week between Israeli and PNA security chiefs that Israel denounced as insufficient and a second meeting between high-level political officials on Wednesday which Palestinians derided as a failure.

On Friday morning, Mr. Arafat ordered Palestinian officials to stay away from a meeting with Israelis on how to resume security cooperation, suspended two months ago. The meeting, to take place at the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv, had been arranged by Mr. Ross.

Mr. Arafat also wrote a letter to President Clinton in which he described Mr. Ross' mission as a disappointment.

"President Arafat saw he had to inform President Clinton of the dangers and ask for a more effective, active role, not only on the Palestinian track but also on the Arab track," said Arafat spokesman Nabil Abu Rudainah.

Mr. Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, and the chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, delivered the letter to Mr. Ross and the U.S. consul general in Jerusalem, Edward Abington, in a meeting at a Jerusalem hotel Friday afternoon.

Underlying the Palestinians' anger is their impression that Mr. Ross has not been standing up to the Israelis, even on basic issues.

For example, Mr. Ross kept silent when Israeli officials told the Palestinians during a high-level meeting this week they would continue building settlements.

Mr. Erekat said he was surprised Mr. Ross didn't weigh in with the longstanding U.S. opposition to Jewish settlement building. "We really wanted to hear Mr. Ross say this because the American stands still, as far as we know, that settlement is illegal and an obstacle to peace," Mr. Erekat said.

Another Palestinian official said Mr. Arafat became exasperated because at each meet-

ing Mr. Ross would simply report what the Israelis had to say, then ask for the Palestinians' view.

"What Ross seemed to be unable to realize is that the situation was beyond listening to what we had to say or what the Israelis are saying. The situation required action," said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Abington, the Jerusalem consul general who serves as a U.S. liaison with the Palestinians, said that while he understood the Palestinians' frustrations, Mr. Arafat's snub of Mr. Ross was not wise.

"I think that when Arafat does not want to see Ross, he is saying he does not want to see the president of the United States, and that is not good," Mr. Abington said.

"Ross' mission has failed completely," Marwan Kanafani, a spokesman for Mr. Arafat, told Reuters.

"The Israelis refused to stop building and expanding settlements. The Americans were not serious and did not want to interfere. It's like having a man in the ring supporting one of the fighters," Mr. Kanafani said.

The PNA demands Israel order a halt to building on Jabal Abu Ghneim, the windswept hill known to Israelis as Har Homa. It sees the settlement as an attempt to pre-empt final peace talks on the status of Jerusalem.

Israeli leaders have said they will not stop work at the east Jerusalem site, insisting Jews have a right to live in all the Biblical land of Israel — including east Jerusalem, part of the West Bank occupied by Israel since 1967.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was cautiously upbeat about the results of Wednesday's meeting attended by high-level negotiators.

"I think yesterday's meeting was a preliminary one which creates the basis for additional rounds of talks," Mr. Netanyahu told members of his ruling coalition in Tel Aviv on Thursday.

He said the summer session of parliament, due to start next week, would be held "under the sign of a resumption of talks" broken off over the east Jerusalem settlement.

A U.S. embassy spokesman said Mr. Ross felt Wednesday's meeting was a "useful... opportunity to hear each other's concerns."

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy was due to meet U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Washington on Friday on the Mid-



Israeli bulldozers continue Friday the controversial construction of a new Israeli settlement in Arab east Jerusalem, which has disrupted the peace process. Israeli Department of Antiquities disclosed the Friday that the work has damaged the ruins of a Byzantine church dated back to fifth century. The church was built on a site where, according to Christian tradition, the Virgin Mary took some rest on her way to Bethlehem where she gave birth to Jesus (AFP photo)

Settlement bulldozers damage old church

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Bulldozers working on a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem have seriously damaged the remains of an ancient church, an official at Israel's antiquities authority said Friday.

Mr. Netanyahu conditioned resumption of negotiations on a PNA crackdown on "terror" after a militant killed himself and three Israelis in a Tel Aviv

die East peace crisis.

"It won't be solved in one conversation or in a day but it seems to me there is a beginning here, and with patience and by sticking to the positions upon which we must stand firm, we can perhaps achieve progress," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Mr. Netanyahu said while parts of the site had been excavated most of it was still underground but had been fenced off. Archaeologists say the mosaic floors damaged by the bulldozers were unique in richness and design.

"There is damage to the mosaics and the walls," Mr. Greenhut said. He said the authority had successfully prevented the paving of a road over the site five years ago.

Mr. Greenhut said the Israeli housing ministry was responsible for the work and the damage. Ministry officials were not immediately available to comment.

Palestinians say the construction strengthens Israel's hold on the eastern Arab part of Jerusalem, occupied since the 1967 Middle East war, and pre-empt final peace talks at which Jerusalem is to be negotiated.

Palestinians want Arab east Jerusalem as the capital of a future state. Israel says it will never give up any part of what it calls its eternal, united capital.

Israel's president cuts ties with Netanyahu — paper

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman was quoted by an Israeli newspaper on Friday as saying he had cut off contact with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over his attitude towards a peacemaking crisis with the Palestinians.

"I have cut all contact with him. Bibi isn't ready to listen. He knows everything," the daily Yediot Aharonot quoted Mr. Weizman, using Mr. Netanyahu's nickname, as saying.

"When I returned from the meeting with Arafat, I thought he would want to hear what happened there. Not at all."

Mr. Weizman, whose post is largely ceremonial, is well-known in Israel for bluntness. He met Mr. Arafat 10 days ago in an effort to overcome a two-month impasse in Israel-Palestinian peace talks.

Mr. Netanyahu this week said he was proud of the decision to build the 6,500-unit settlement.

The incident was the latest controversy surrounding Israel's building of the settlement. Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking ground to a halt when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered work to begin at the site on March 18.

"Despite all the warnings of the antiquities authority and specific instructions to the planners, they ignored what they were told and ran over the church and serious-

Ministry asks political parties to submit their annual budgets

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid on Friday asked the secretary generals of 13 political parties registered at the ministry to submit their annual budget for the year 1996 and their estimated budgets for 1997 to his ministry, Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Petra quoted Mr. Rashid as saying that 13 political parties have not submitted their annual and estimated budgets yet which is a violation of the Jordanian Political Parties Law.

Mr. Rashid, who did

not name these parties, said Article 20 of the Jordanian Political Parties Law of 1992 stipulates that "each party must submit a copy of its budget to the ministry in the first quarter of the year and must unveil its financial resources and financial position and that the minister or any authorised representative has the right to inspect its accounts and audit them."

Mr. Rashid called on the secretary generals of the parties that defaulted in submitting their budgets to the ministry to do so or otherwise face

legal action.

In remarks carried by the local press last week Mr. Rashid said he was worried about the conduct of political parties.

"I am worried and I want to inspect (the parties). I want to activate (the law) and form a special committee to decide whether the parties are abiding by the law or not. We have no bad intentions towards the parties. We should all adhere to the law at all times," he said.

Three Israeli soldiers killed in Lebanon clashes in the south

RASHAYA, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli warplanes fired missiles at guerrilla bases in southern Lebanon Friday after pro-Iranian fighters killed three Israeli soldiers and wounded seven others in night-long clashes, officials said.

In Jerusalem, an Israeli army spokesman said two guerrillas were also killed in the fighting.

Israeli warplanes fired at least 20 air-to-surface missiles in some 13 sorties over bases used by the Hizbollah militia in Jabal Al Dahar, an area just east of the site of Thursday's clashes, Lebanese officials said. They spoke on customary condition of anonymity.

Thick black smoke could be seen billowing from the stricken area. There was

no immediate word on casualties.

The fighting began late Thursday after an elite paratroop unit stumbled on a squad of Hizbollah guerrillas in the southern Bekaa Valley, the Israeli army spokesman said, speaking on customary condition of anonymity.

One soldier was killed and three wounded before the Israelis returned fire killing two of the guerrillas, the army spokesman said.

Two more soldiers were killed and one wounded when the guerrillas opened fire as the Israelis began evacuating the area, the army spokesman said.

The spokesman said three other soldiers were very slightly wounded in the gunbattles, but gave no

details.

Hizbollah, in a statement, reported a "strong confrontation" in the region, but made no mention of casualties on either side.

In the two hours after the start of the fighting, Israeli soldiers fired more than 350 shells at the area, Lebanese officials said.

The Israelis battled the guerrillas about 2.5 kilometres north of the enclave that Israel occupies in southern Lebanon.

After the clash, Israeli helicopters fired four missiles at suspected guerrilla positions near the fighting. Lebanese army units fired anti-aircraft guns at the helicopters, and a Lebanese armoured personnel carrier was strafed, officials said.

Kurdish resistance calls for mobilisation

BRUSSELS (R) — The European representative of rebel Kurdish guerrilla fighters called on Friday for Kurdish people and their sympathisers outside the country to prepare for war against Turkish forces attacking northern Iraq.

"Our citizens in the West must respond to the call for mobilisation," Dogan Cudi of the Front for the National Liberation of Kurdistan (FLNK), a wing of the separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), told a news conference.

"Our people must be ready, if necessary, for war. They must make their preparations and await the call. They must take their places beside the Kurdish people before it is too late," he said.

Turkish troops, backed by air force jets and helicopters, pushed into southern Kurdistan in the early hours of Wednesday in an operation against PKK camps deep inside Iraq.

The incursion — the biggest in two years and involving at least 10,000 troops — was carried out under a "news blackout" with journalists barred from the region and film and mobile telephones confiscated by Iraqi Kurds supporting the attack.

Mr. Cudi said the operation would destabilise the region and called on the West and the Arab World to condemn it and to withdraw their support for the Turkish government.

"To stay silent is unthinkable," he said.

Syria praises Erbakan for trying to stop manoeuvres

CAIRO (AP) — Syria on Wednesday encouraged Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to block planned naval exercises involving Turkey, Israel and the United States this summer.

Mr. Erbakan told reporters on Tuesday that "the manoeuvres are postponed to coming years." The Turkish military denied that.

Fayez Sayegh, chief of the official Syrian Arab News Agency, said in a column Wednesday that Mr. Erbakan's stance "is a step that is worthy of esteemed appreciation."

He added: "What the Israeli military is planning for — and which has, to some extent, been approved by the Turkish military — would never serve the region but would, rather, threaten its security and expose it to gross dangers."

Mr. Sayegh stressed that the Arabs are keen to maintain good relations with Muslim Turkey.

Arab countries have been highly critical of Turkey's warming relations with Israel and see the planned manoeuvres as a threat to their security.

Turkey already has agreed to allow Israeli pilots to train in Turkish airspace and has given a contract to an Israeli firm to upgrade its F-4 fighter jets.

On Wednesday, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa was quoted as saying that

the planned naval exercises were ill-timed because of the impasse in the Middle East peace process.

Talks between Palestinians and Israelis collapsed two months ago when Israel pushed ahead with construction of a settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

"They (the manoeuvres) are causing a lot of excitement and concern, especially because they are coming while Israel is standing against the peace process," Mr. Musa told the London based Al Hayat newspaper.

President Hosni Mubarak told Abu Dhabi Television Tuesday night that the manoeuvres appeared aimed at frightening Syria, which both Turkey and Israel consider as hostile.

Syria is Israel's arch foe in the Arab World, and Turkey and Syria are engaged in a dispute over water. Turkey also accused Syria of harbouring Kurds who have been fighting for autonomy in Turkey.

Iraq, Libya and Persian Iran also have criticised the manoeuvres.

The Iraqi News Agency reported Wednesday that Justice Minister Shabib Lazem Malik complained to Mr. Erbakan about the manoeuvres during a meeting in Ankara on Tuesday.



ASHOURA DAY: Supporters of former Hizbollah Secretary General Sheikh Soubhi Toufayli hold their hands during a gathering of 10,000 members of Iranian-backed Hizbollah in Baalbeck on Friday to commemorate the martyrdom of Shiite Muslim Imam Hussein. The Imam was killed along with his family in 680 AD in the southern central Iraqi town of Karbala after a ten-day siege (AFP photo)

Yemeni prime minister forms new cabinet without Islamist party

SANAA (AP) — Yemen's new prime minister formed a cabinet on Thursday that drew most of its membership from the country's ruling party, state-run Sanaa Radio said Thursday.

No ministers were included from the Islamist Islah Party, which served in the last government but chose to become part of the opposition after April's parliamentary elections, the radio said.

The General People's Congress (GPC) of President Ali Abdullah Saleh

won 187 of the 301 seats, while Islah won 53. Five seats went to smaller parties, while 54 went to independents. Results in two districts were cancelled and new balloting will be held.

The Congress' majority meant that it could form the government alone. In the 1993 election, it won only a plurality and had to seek a coalition partner to gain a majority in parliament.

Yemen's elections are considered the fairest on the Arabian peninsula, where most countries are

monarchies. On Wednesday, Mr. Saleh named Faraj Ben Ghanem as prime minister.

Mr. Ben Ghanem was a minister of planning from 1989-90 in the former Marxist-led government of South Yemen, and his choice was seen as an attempt to broaden the government's support.

South Yemen joined the conservative, traditional north in a union in 1990. But that union was almost wrecked by a 1994 civil war, and the defeat has left some southerners dis-

enchanted with what they consider economic and political dominance by the north.

In the new government, only 11 ministers remained in the cabinet. Among them were Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Iryani, Information Minister Abdul Rahman Mohammed Akwa and Interior Minister Hussein Mohammed Arab, the radio said.

Several ministers were chosen from smaller opposition parties and independents, the radio said.

Saudi beheaded for rape, drug trafficking

RIYADH (AP) — A Saudi man convicted of rape and drug trafficking was beheaded Friday in the Holy City of Mecca, the Interior Ministry said.

It said Muzker Ben Ali Otaiby was found guilty of raping a woman and of using and selling heroin and other narcotics.

One of his friends died from an overdose of heroin which came from Otaiby, the ministry said.

His execution raised to 32 the number of people beheaded this year in Saudi Arabia. Last year, 71 people were executed. Islamic courts in this kingdom impose capital punishment for rape, murder and drug trafficking.

Western human rights groups have criticised the executions, saying defendants often are denied fair trials.

The kingdom is the United States' closest Arab ally, home to Islam's holiest shrines and the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad.

Egypt to inaugurate nuclear research reactor

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt expects to begin operating its second nuclear research reactor in October, six months ahead of schedule, a top official said Friday.

The new 22-megawatt reactor, which is estimated to cost some \$63 million, will be 11 times as powerful as its predecessor.

Egypt's first reactor, a Soviet-made, 2-megawatt reactor was built in 1961 in

Inshas, 40 kilometres northwest of Cairo. The new reactor is also being built there.

The new reactor will be used for scientific research, particularly medical research, said Hisham Fouad, chairman of Egypt's Atomic Energy Authority. Fouad was speaking to reporters at Cairo airport before he left for Geneva for talks with officials at the

International Atomic Energy Agency on the agency's \$500,000 grant to Egypt to produce radioactive isotopes jointly with China.

He did not give additional details. Egypt is a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has always stressed that the reactor is for peaceful purposes and will operate under international safeguards.

Israeli couple fights Orthodox definition of Judaism

TEL AVIV (AP) — To David and Ayala Milstein, their son Omri was Jewish from the moment they adopted him as a seven-week-old baby from an Uzbekistan orphanage and brought him home to Israel.

"From the second we adopted him, from the second we took him into our home — he was our son as if he were born to us biologically," David Milstein said. "So he is a Jew."

But in Israel, the determination of Jewishness is far more than personal. Orthodox rabbis refused to convert Omri to Judaism unless the Milsteins, who are secular, agreed to follow an orthodox lifestyle.

The government has refused to recognise his conversion by non-orthodox rabbis.

The Milsteins and another Israeli couple are suing this week in Israel's supreme court to force the government to recognise their children as Jewish.

That recognition affects whether a person can marry or even be buried in Israel, where the orthodox establishment controls marriage, divorce and death proceedings.

It "means the world," said David Milstein. "I'm trying to picture him at the kinder-

garten, and other children saying he's not a Jew. We want him to live as a normal child."

The lawsuit is part of a much larger struggle over the role of religion in a democracy that also happens to be the Jewish state.

The fallout from that struggle spreads far beyond Israel's borders, resonating most strongly in the United States, where 90 per cent of American Jews belong to movements not recognised as legitimate in Israel.

Last month, a bill to invalidate conversions by non-orthodox rabbis inside Israel passed the first of three readings in parliament.

Although the bill addresses only conversions inside Israel, it outraged thousands of reform and conservative Jews in the United States who provide Israel with political and financial support.

"The message is: you're second-class Jews," said Rabbi Arnie Hirsch, executive director of the Association of Reform Zionists of America.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly assured American Jews that his government would not do anything to affect their status.

But religious parties, who won a record 23 out of 120 parliament seats last year and comprise about one-third of Mr. Netanyahu's governing coalition, say they want to expand the bill to include overseas conversions as well.

And Reform activists in Israel say cases such as the Milsteins' belie Mr. Netanyahu's assurances.

"It is simply a false statement," said Rabbi Uri Regav, director of the Israeli Reform Movement's Religious Action Centre. "There is a general onslaught on reform and conservative conversions, whether done in Israel or overseas."

The plight of the Reform and Conservative Movements draws little attention in Israel, where most Israeli Jews are secular and most of those who are observant are orthodox.

Like most Israelis, the Milsteins had never had any contact with non-Orthodox Judaism before they turned to Reform rabbis to convert their son. There is no Reform synagogue in Beersheba, where they live.

"People don't know what Reform is about," David Milstein said. "The Orthodox

are making it look like a big circus, not like a religious movement."

Although the Milsteins now support the Reform movement, the issue for them is how much influence the religious should have over their daily lives.

When they brought their son to Israel last fall, they took him to the Orthodox rabbinate in Beersheba to be converted.

"How do we know the biological father wasn't a murderer?" the rabbi asked them.

Another rabbi told them he was willing to convert Omri, but only if the Milsteins agreed to raise him according to Orthodox Jewish law — including sending him to religious schools, keeping the Sabbath, and observing Jewish dietary laws.

When the boy was six or seven, the rabbi said, the rabbinate would check to see if the Milsteins had kept their promise. If not, he warned, Omri's Jewishness could be revoked.

"We don't believe in this kind of enforcement," Mr. Milstein said. "And we don't think that we want to bring him up this way."

On the advice of a Reform rabbi, the cou-

ple took Omri to London, where he underwent conversion — including a ritual immersion — before four Reform rabbis.

In Israel, the Interior Ministry registered Omri as Israeli, but refused to list him as a Jew — leaving blank the space for religion that appears on every Israeli's ID card.

The matter of conversions by people who make quick trips overseas to get them is under examination and "not acceptable at the moment," Alisa Inbari, an Interior Ministry spokeswoman, told the Associated Press.

Ministry officials told the Milsteins that Omri would be registered as Jewish eventually, once the conversion law was sorted out.

But the Milsteins were not placated. What if the law changes and he is not recognised as Jewish?

"They don't have the right to tell me and my husband how to be good Jews," said Ayala Milstein. "We did it according to the law."

"They don't have any right to tell us what to do with our little son."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:35 French Programmes
16:00 Gillette World Sport
16:30 Doc — Innovations
16:50 Tilt
17:15 Drama — Blue Heeders
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hangin' With Mr. Cooper
20:00 Doc — Magazine (I)
20:30 Prison
21:10 Time Trax
22:00 News in English
22:25 McGyver
23:15 Feature film — "Killer Rule"

PRAYER TIMES

04:03 Fajr
05:33 (Sunrise) Dhuha
12:32 Dhuhr
16:13 Asr
19:31 Maghreb
21:00 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661656

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Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 625541

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771551

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824338

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
The effect of the heat wave will diminish gradually with tempera-

nure dropping to become around average and winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, moderate weather conditions will prevail, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 19/29

Aqaba 32/36

Deserts 16/32

Jordan Valley 22/36

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 32 Aqaba 38 Humidity readings: Amman 35 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Nidal Al-Ashad 751672

Dr. Issam Al-Asmar 890894

Dr. Osama Al-Husseini 847289

Dr. Abdul Rahim Mustafa 744685

Firas pharmacy 661912

Ferdows pharmacy 778336

Al Asena pharmacy 637055

Natroukh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh 250080

AI Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Hafez Salfti 914144

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53300

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 813813/52

Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 642816

Akileh Maternity, J. Amn 642412

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

AI-Muasher Hospital 667279

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

AI-Abli, Abdali 664164/6

Italian, AI-Muhajreen 777101/3

AI-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26

Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09/983323

Zarqa National Hospital 09/900560

Ibn Sina Hospital 09/986732

AI-Bikam Modern Hospital 09/990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555

Greek Catholic Hospital 02/272275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 02/247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital 03/314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by

Royal Jordanian (RJ) information

department at the Queen Alia

International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should

always be verified. Information on

other flights is obtained on

telephone (08) 52700 or (08) 523250.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:00 Damascus (RJ)

10:30 New Delhi (RJ)

10:45 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)

11:05 Beirut (RJ)

11:30 Colombo (RJ)

15:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

King affirms Jordanian support for ARABSAT

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein has expressed Jordan's full support for the Arab Satellite Communication Organisation (ARABSAT) which, he affirmed, contributes to the improvement of inter-Arab telecommunication services and helps in the transfer of modern technology to the Arab World.

In a meeting at the Royal Court Thursday, attended by Arab delegates to the 20th meeting of the ARABSAT General Assembly in Amman, the King wished the delegates success in their endeavours and in promoting inter-Arab ties.

In the meeting, the ARABSAT board chairman outlined the organisation's achievements in improving telecommunications among Arab nations as

well as its plans for the future. He also presented the King with the organisation's shield.

Earlier Thursday, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali deputised for the King at the opening of the ARABSAT conference, stressing that the present era calls for global openness and the removal of borders and other barriers so that cultures and knowledge can flow unencumbered.

Referring to Jordan's contributions to the organisation, the prime minister maintained that the Kingdom has never failed to aid the organisation, especially as ARABSAT is a pan-Arab project benefiting all Arab nations and serving the entire Arab people.

He said that Jordan has restructured its telecommunications services and

has gone a long way towards securing modern telecommunications services for Jordan with the private sector playing a key role in this matter.

Nearly one-third of Jordanian telecommunications services come through ARABSAT and Jordanian television programmes are beamed through the ARABSAT facilities, Dr. Majali said.

Jordanian people have free access to direct satellite television programmes through private satellite networks, including ARABSAT, he added.

Thanking the general assembly for its endeavours to promote the satellite network services, the prime minister urged ARABSAT to further efforts in raising the efficiency of the network for the benefit of the Arab World.

International conference to form 'popular strategy to defend Holy City' of Jerusalem

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Opposition parties secured government approval to hold a high-level international conference next month, focusing on ways to protect Jerusalem from Israeli settlement plans and to formulate a "popular strategy to defend the holy city," an organiser said Friday.

Salim Nahhas, member of the Jordan National Committee to Defend Jerusalem, said that the two-day meeting, slated to commence June 25, will be attended by nearly 2,000 participants from Arab, Islamic and other countries.

Mr. Nahhas told the Jordan Times that the conference will cover an "economic, political and social plan to defy Israeli policies in Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular."

He added that a committee, headed by Secretary General of Al Mustaqbal Party Suleiman Arar, will prepare for the conference.

On Wednesday, a four-person team, representing opposition parties, met with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali to procure his approval to convene the two-day conference. The delegation included former Prime Minister Taher Masri, Islamic Action Front Secretary General Ishaq Farhan, Mr. Arar and Mr. Nahhas.

Dr. Majali consented to their petition.

The source added that the government agreed to allow foreign participants "without exception" to participate, including some who were previously denied entry to the Kingdom.

The source declined to elaborate.

Dr. Farhan and Mr. Arar told the Jordan Times that they agreed with the prime minister not to release any statement to the press regarding the conference and they declined to give further details of the meeting.

Among those the organisers intend to invite to the June meeting are: Coptic

Pope Shenuda II from Egypt, Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar Mohammad Sayed Tantawi, former Egyptian Chief-of-Staff Saad Al Din Shadli, former Lebanese Prime Minister Saleem Hoss, former Algerian President Ahmad Ben Bella, former Sudanese President Mohammad Seward Al Dahab, a representative from Turkey's Al Rafah party unnamed as of yet, Head of Hamas Algerian Mahfouz Nahnah and Edward Said, a Palestinian intellectual currently residing in the United States.

The list of invitees also includes: Egyptian journalist Adel Hussein, exiled Tunisian Islamic leader Rashid Ghanoush, Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood leader Abdul Majid Zandani and a member from Lebanon's Hizbollah party whose name was not given.

Participants represent Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Morocco, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran,

Malaysia, Indonesia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Bangladesh, and France.

Last month, Jordanian and Palestinian businesspersons held a conference in Amman and upon its conclusion, announced the creation of a \$100 million private firm to invest in Jerusalem in order to counter Israeli settlement plans in the Holy City.

The firm will invest in building hotels, housing projects and agriculture.

Meanwhile, the Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar Mohammad Sayed Tantawi called on Muslims and Christians to return Jerusalem to Arab control by force if no peaceful settlement could be reached.

"Jerusalem is in the heart of each Muslim and Christian. If peaceful means are not practical (in regaining the city), then we should resort to force to defend our land," the Associated Press quoted Sheikh Tantawi as saying in a Cairo conference Thursday.

Queen opens Jordan River Designs spring exhibition

AMMAN (J.T.) — "Spring is blossoming" at Jordan River Designs (JRD) Showroom in Jabal Amman, where Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday opened their annual spring exhibition, a Royal Court statement said.

The Queen expressed her pride in the mutual creativity and cooperation between the various non-governmental handicrafts organisations working together to revive traditional crafts and stimulate the handicrafts industry into a source of national income.

The exhibition featured JRD's latest collection of quilts, cushions, tablecloths and home accessories with colourful floral designs as well as its new baby line and projects from the Dana Nature Reserve, the statement said.

Works by local artists were also on display and included watercolour paintings by Salam Kanaan and

mosaics and ceramics by Maria Tunundjian, a graduate of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation's Salt Handicrafts Development Centre.

Handicrafts by the disabled added a special dimension, with baby and children's clothes produced by Kenz, an affiliated shop, as well as furniture made by the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf and the Swedish Organisation for Individual Relief.

JRD, established in 1987 by the Save the Children Fund in cooperation with the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, has been transferred to the Jordan River for Development Projects (JRDP), a non-profit organisation under the presidency of HRH Princess Rania Abdullah, whose objectives are to "improve the financial, cultural, health, social, educational, technical skills and well-being of the community at large."

JRDP's projects also include prevention of child abuse and youth employment, according to the statement.

Since its inception, JRD has benefited more than 1,604 women who have received approximately JD 445,000 in wages, thereby enabling them to contribute to 36 per cent of their household income.

JRD, which began as an income-generating project for women in East Amman, plans to expand to other underprivileged communities in Jordan, the statement said.

Attending the opening were JRDP President HRH Princess Rania Abdullah, Honorary President of Kenz HRH Princess Dina Mired, JRDP board member staff and beneficiaries of JRD.

Jordan, Germany sign DM 102 m protocol

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan and Germany Thursday signed a DM 102 million protocol slated to cover debt alleviation, soft loans and grants to be used in water projects and, poverty eradication programmes in the Kingdom.

The protocol, signed by Deputy Secretary of State at the Ministry of Economic Cooperation in Germany Bernard Schweiger and Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf, envisages DM 50 million as its allocation for 1997, DM 12 million in technical assistance and DM 40 million for relieving its debt to Germany.

In terms of the DM 50 million allocation, DM 30 million is considered as a soft loan to finance water projects in Wadi Mousa, the Greater Amman area, Irbid and for transferring water from Zai (in Salt) to Dabouk (in Amman). The remaining DM 20 million comes in the form of a German grant to be used in the newly-launched Social Security Programme (SSP).

"We are concentrating the major part of this aid towards poverty eradication, an issue to which the Jordanian government attaches great priority," Mr. Schweiger said following the signing of the protocol. "We want to support their efforts in that particular field, so we have provided

DM 20 million mark in the form of a grant."

He added that Germany has new commitments for projects which would transport water from the Jordan Valley to different locations in the Kingdom "to prepare the ground for Israeli commitments, [as stipulated by] the peace accord to provide Jordan with a certain amount of water."

In terms of technical cooperation, the German official described a number of experts from his country as working in Jordan.

German experts are working in different government departments such as the Water Authority and the ministries of agriculture and finance.

Mr. Schweiger told reporters that Jordan is on the verge of "concluding" another agreement within the Paris Club... a debt release from the Germans, the amount involved is DM 40 million.

"Of course this has still to be negotiated," he added. "However, we are confident that the debt release will be effected."

This sum will be used in SSP projects to eradicate poverty and safeguard the environment, according to Mr. Schweiger.

"Currently, Jordan and Palestine are preferred partners, not only in the Middle East but all over the world in terms of allocation," he concluded.

Prosecution requests subpoena of lab experts in case of Mazen Masri

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The criminal prosecutor in the case of Mazen Masri, a man accused of killing his two children last year, Thursday asked the Criminal Court to subpoena four persons to clarify an alleged Criminal Laboratory mistake concerning the percentage of cyanide detected in the children's blood.

"I received a letter from the director of the Criminal Laboratory informing me that there was a mistake in the calculation of the cyanide percentage in the victims' blood, and to ensure justice, I request the subpoena of four persons to clarify the matter," Criminal Prosecutor Ali Abu Hjeleh said.

According to Mr. Abu Hjeleh, these persons include: Director of the Criminal Laboratory, Colonel Matrouk Hababeh, Major Hassan Milhem and Captain Nidal Batayneh, also from the Criminal Laboratory, and Head of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine Pathologist Mo'men Hadidi.

Defence Attorney Ahmad Najdawi, who Thursday rested his case, contested the criminal prosecutor's request to summon new witnesses.

"The prosecution has rested its case, and cannot subpoena new witnesses and I call on the court to turn down its request," Attorney Najdawi said.

The court tribunal headed by Justices Abdul Rahman Tawfiq, Mifleh Mubeidin and Ismael Hmouz adjourned the session to May 22 "to study both prosecution and defence requests."

Mr. Masri, 34, reportedly confessed to authorities on Sept. 25, 1996 to administering two cyanide pills to his two children Hanin, eight, and Hani, six, before leaving to work on the morning of Sept. 11.

On Dec. 31, Mr. Masri retracted previous confessions,

stating that his confessions were fabrications to end psychological pressure put on him by police.

The Criminal Laboratory report, six days following the children's death, indicated that between 600-650 milligrams of cyanide salts per blood litre were detected in the children.

However, on April 24 an expert witness, testifying for the defence, stated that in order for such a high percentage of cyanide to be present in the children's blood, each of them would have had to have consumed at least three cyanide pills.

The expert testimony contradicts both Mr. Masri's confession to authorities that he gave one cyanide pill to each of his two children, and the Criminal Laboratory report, which, according to judicial sources, will be clarified if the court decides to summon new witnesses.

Also during Tuesday's court session, the court heard the last two scheduled defence witnesses in the case.

Khitar Barqawi, director of the kindergarten the children attended, told the court that she had not witnessed anything unusual about the children.

"They were normal children and never complained of any parental mistreatment," Ms. Barqawi testified.

Hisham Aza, the attending doctor at Shmeisani Hospital, where the children were taken on Sept. 11, told the court that he was the first person to see and examine the children.

"The two children were brought to hospital at approximately 7:00 a.m., and we tried to resuscitate them but in vain," Dr. Aza said.

The two children, who were left alone for almost 25 minutes that morning, were subsequently found collapsed by their mother, Hiam Hamoudah, who had just returned home after giving her husband a ride to work.

Trio Doppler to perform tonight

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

UPON THE initiative of the Italian Embassy in Amman in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Jerash Festival for Culture and Arts, and the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) — music lovers in Jordan will have the rare opportunity to listen to the Trio Doppler.

The ensemble will perform tonight at 8:00 at the new GAM City Hall and will also give a private recital on May 19th.

The trio is composed of Franz Albanese and Deborah Kruzansky on flute and Maria Grazia Zagame on piano. Founded in 1978 in Rome, the Trio Doppler — named for Franz Doppler, a 19th century composer — is original in many ways. Its very structure, two flutes and a piano, is not commonly found.

It does, however, deliver an extremely pleasant, charming sound. Also, the repertoire of the trio includes several pieces, unjustly forgotten, that Franz Albanese has adapted to the ensemble. To their astounding virtuosity the trio's members add the intelligent choice of an "open-minded" programme which juxtaposes J.S. Bach, George Gersh-



The Trio Doppler is to perform tonight at the new Greater Amman Municipality City Hall

win and some contemporary composers side by side, as can be heard on a sample of their recordings.

On Saturday, the Trio Doppler will play pieces by Gaetano Donizetti, Gianfranco Plenizio, Franz Doppler, Giuseppe Verdi, Franz Albanese himself, and a very fine number by Chinese Composer Yan Jiang entitled "Nostalgia." This piece particularly enhances the combination of the two flutes, producing wonderful harmonies and creating a special musical atmosphere.

with the greatest of the flute masters, Jean-Pierre Rampal and James Galway to name only two.

Maria Grazia Zagame belongs to the exclusive category of young prodigies — she started studying music at four and was already performing in public at ten as a professional performer. She is regularly recording for major record companies and has also extensively played abroad.

The proceeds from tonight's concert will go to Al Hussein Welfare Society.

where.

Franz Albanese is currently director of the Italian State Conservatory of Music. He has performed in more than 52 countries and has played as a soloist in numerous orchestras.

His professional experience includes countless recordings both for radio, television and record companies. Deborah Kruzansky graduated from the prestigious Juilliard School of Music, the Conservatoire National de Paris and the Freiburg Musik Hochschule. She studied

U.N. seminar to convene in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — A seminar on assistance to the Palestinians, under the theme "promoting Palestinian human development," has been convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in accordance with its mandate to promote international support and assistance for the Palestinian people, an ESCWA statement said Thursday.

The aim of the seminar is to build on economic and social issues, held under the committee's auspices over the past four years, and to positively contribute to international efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles, signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in September 1993.

The opening session of the seminar is to be held Tuesday, May 20 at 10:00 a.m. in "Philadelphia Ballroom," the statement said.

A representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations will speak,

as will UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen, the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People Ibra Deguene Ka, and the Minister of Economy and Trade in the Palestinian Authority Maher Al Masri.

A plenary session will follow entitled "meeting Palestinian human development needs: The role of international assistance."

Mr. Masri will be the keynote speaker for the session, according to the statement.

Representatives of donor countries, regional organisations, United Nations bodies and agencies involved in programmes promoting Palestinian human development, other intergovernmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also slated to participate.

The participants will also meet in three round tables during the session.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

*Spring exhibition '97 entitled "Spring is Blooming" at the Jordan River Designs (Tel. 613061/2), until May 31.

*Works by Omar Shahwan at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthama (Tel. 5526932), until May 29.

*Works by Issam Tantawi at Alia Art Gallery, Jabal Amman, until May 29.

*"The Water of Deserts" at the Royal Cultural Centre, until May 22.

*Display of caricature drawings by Imad Hajjaj at Balqa Art Gallery, Fuhes, until May 25.

*Exhibition of Italian products at the Amman International Motor Show, Marj Al Hamam, until May 18.

*Photo exhibition entitled "Fragments" by Wa'el Al Masri at The Gallery, Hotel Inter Continental, Jabal Amman until May 22.

*Display of paintings, sculptures, mosaic, ceramics, works, jewellery and food products of Dana Valley at the Embassy of Pakistan, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 23.

*Works by Paris-based Moroccan artist Najia Mahsoudi at Darat Al-Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 12. Also showing an exhibition by architectural photographer Said Nuseibeh entitled "The Farthest Mosque" and by contemporary Arab artists.

*Bani Hamida spring exhibition entitled "Crossing Borders" (displaying rugs, cushions, runners, and wall hangings) at the Jordan Contractors Association's Building, Dar Al-Ghubar (Tel. 658696), until May 18.

Heat wave shows signs of abating

AMMAN (J.T.) — The heat wave currently affecting the Kingdom should begin to ease over the next two days with temperatures dropping to around 30 degrees centigrade from its fairly constant high of 36 degrees over the past week, the Department of Meteorology stated Friday.

A department official told the Jordan Times that the heat wave, which advanced from the Arabian Peninsula, will ease with the arrival of westerly humid winds.

The official estimated average night time temperatures as reaching 19 degrees Saturday and Sunday.

Rain, accompanied by lightning and thunder, fell in different parts of the Kingdom Thursday night, with the heaviest concentration in Karak and Maan.

In these southern regions, the flooded streets temporarily disrupted traffic in low-lying areas and caused some landslides in a number of villages with resultant road accidents which damaged five trucks and injured at least one truck-driver.

Renowned Syrian playwright succumbs to cancer at age 65

AMMAN (J.T.) — Renowned Arab playwright Sa'dallah Wannous, who passed away in Damascus at the age of 65, was Friday laid to rest in his hometown of Hasin Al Bahr on the Syrian coast.

Mr. Wannous, who died subsequent to a battle with cancer, left behind a collection of books and publications and was nominated by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for a Nobel Prize in literature but fell comatose before hearing the announcement.

Contemporary writers lauded the late Mr. Wannous as a leading Arab intellectual who tackled literary, political and social issues in his writings and the Jordan Writers Association expressed its grief over the loss which, it said, will be felt by the entire Arab World.

Mr. Wannous was born in 1941, and filled a number of posts in Syria but later dedicated his life to writing books, plays and articles for the media.

He also translated many foreign literary works into Arabic.

IAEA to launch tougher nuclear checks worldwide

VIENNA (R) — The world's atomic watchdog agency is to launch a new, more intrusive system of inspections aimed at preventing countries from secretly building nuclear weapons, agency and diplomatic sources said Friday.

More than 100 member nations of the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have backed proposals to give the organisation more teeth in detecting any suspicious goings-on in a country's nuclear programme.

The IAEA, shaken by the discovery of a nuclear arms programme in Iraq and suspicions that North Korea harboured the same ambitions, has spent the past four years seeking agreement to give its nuclear experts more muscle.

The body's decision-making board of governors met in special session Thursday and was expected to give the final go-ahead to a protocol for a strengthened inspections regime later Friday, one source close to the IAEA told Reuters.

"This marks a quantum leap in the history of the IAEA," one source close to the IAEA told Reuters. "We will be able to be much more curious without being more aggressive."

The protocol will not apply to nuclear weapons states — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — but they have signalled they are prepared to adopt some of the measures as a sign of goodwill, the source said.

Washington is expected to agree to most of the terms.

The protocol will have to be ratified by individual countries, some through parliaments, and could take time to be fully operational, the source said.

The agency, set up 40 years ago, took on a policing role in the wake of the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, monitoring compliance of safeguards provisions.

But inspectors were allowed only to check the nuclear sites declared by an IAEA member and had to give advance notice of a

visit to a government, which then had enough time to conceal any evidence that it was up to no good.

Following the Gulf War in 1991, the agency was genuinely shocked, not to say embarrassed, to discover that Baghdad had been developing a nuclear arms programme.

IAEA inspectors had conducted checks of some sites in Iraq prior to Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, but was not allowed near other non-declared areas.

"The shock galvanised the IAEA into action," one diplomatic source said. "Iraq was a catalytic moment."

In 1993, agency suspicions, backed by U.S. intelligence reports, that North Korea was trying to build a nuclear bomb was a second sharp reminder that IAEA surveillance was limited.

Inspectors had no powers to investigate suspect buildings in Yongbyong they believed were used for clandestine research into a nuclear weapons programme.

The new guidelines are

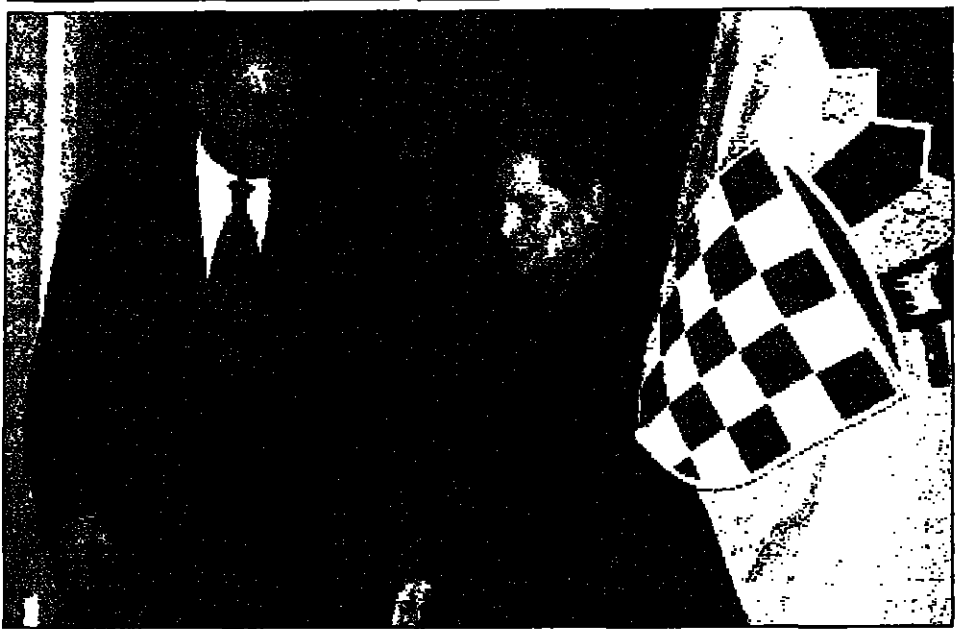
aimed at allowing inspections, at short notice and giving experts the authority to check any non-declared installations, especially research and development locations.

"The inspectors will be able to say, 'oh, that's an interesting hut, I'd like to have a look at that,'" the IAEA source said.

State-of-the-art technology will be used to collect soil, water and other samples, analyse them and check the findings of the level of radioactive activity against the nuclear programme reports submitted by a nation.

Inspectors will use satellite communications to hook into the nuclear database in Vienna and file their reports home, saving the time and expense of travelling back and forth from IAEA headquarters.

Remote surveillance will be set up, feeding information directly into IAEA computers in Vienna, the source added.



Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mate Granic (left) talks with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the State Department. Mr. Granic is in the U.S. on an official visit (Reuters photo)

Albright lambasts Croatia over Serbs

WASHINGTON (R) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has lambasted Croatia's foreign minister over his country's treatment of Serbs and other Dayton Peace Accord violations, the State Department said.

"I can't remember a tougher meeting in a long time that the secretary's had with a ... visiting foreign minister," spokesman Nicholas Burns said of the 50-minute session that featured a "vigorous discussion back and forth" between Mrs. Albright and Mate Granic.

But U.S. officials said Mr. Granic and other Croatian officials were extremely defensive and Mrs. Albright did not receive a satisfactory response to her complaints.

She reiterated warnings that Croatia's keen desire to become fully integrated into the West — including membership in key institutions and access to international financing — could be jeopardised if Zagreb failed to meet its commitments under the 1995 Dayton Accords, which ended the Bosnian war.

Mrs. Albright "did not refer specifically to any kind of financial penalties," Mr. Burns said, but he noted that recently Washington abstained on Croatia's bid for an International Monetary Fund loan in order to persuade Zagreb to send an

indicted war criminal to the Hague.

The secretary's complaints Thursday included specific "terrible" incidents of Croatian mob violence against minority Serbs in Eastern Slavonia and of Croatia's refusal to allow Serbs to return to their homes in the Krajina region of the country, Mr. Burns said.

"Why is there mob violence against Serbs? Why are Serbs not allowed to return to their homes in the Krajina region?" were some of the questions posed, he said, adding: "These are the minority Serbs who must be protected by the government of Croatia."

Jacques Klein, an American who is U.N. administrator in Eastern Slavonia, was in the meeting and presented details of specific incidents where "Serbs have been accosted by Croatian mobs. This is a very serious development," Mr. Burns said.

Eastern Slavonia enclave, a once-volatile region dominated by Serbs and bordering the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia, is now administered by the United Nations under a mandate expiring on July 15. It will then become part of Croatia proper and revert to Zagreb's control.

Serbs and human rights monitors reported Thursday from Croatia that Bosnian

Croat refugees have expelled and abused elderly Serbs in central Croatia, threatening them with bombs and smashing windows.

A central element of the Dayton Accords is that displaced persons should be able to return home.

Mrs. Albright "sent a very strong signal that we are unhappy with the lack of commitment, frankly, on the part of the government of Croatia to fundamental aspects of the Dayton Accords," the spokesman said. She "made it crystal clear that the Croatian government had to improve its performance in abiding by the Dayton commitments if it expected to be treated as a true friend and member of the West," he said.

Mrs. Albright reaffirmed U.S. support for full cooperation with the Bosnia war crimes tribunal at the Hague and urged again that Zagreb ensure that all Croatian citizens or people on Croatian territory indicted by the tribunal are handed over to the prosecutors, he added.

In response, Mr. Burns said: "There were long explanations by the Croatian government officials, Minister Granic and others, about why these problems had occurred, why Serbs are not being treated well. So I can't say that the secretary was satisfied that all of her questions had been answered."

only a moral category. It has become a political category. People are tired of slogans and promises," said the 66-year-old Kremlin leader.

"They link their hopes for a better life to honesty of representatives of power."

Mr. Yeltsin's decree covered all leading state representatives, including ministers, security officials, regional governors and members of parliament. The president said he would declare his own income shortly and make it public.

"I am convinced that voters have the right to know about the income and property of all top state officials... the information will be available to the public," he said.

Mr. Yeltsin has publicly launched several campaigns against graft in the top echelons of power and said in March that crime was threatening the very foundations of the Russian state.

But until now little has been done to tackle corruption.

U.S. city puts alleged prostitutes, clients on TV

KANSAS CITY, MO. (R) — City leaders Thursday began televising the names and faces of people arrested for trying to buy and sell sex.

A local government access cable television channel showed mugshots of 44 men arrested during a police decoy operation last week. Future broadcasts will also include the faces of women arrested and charged with prostitution.

Supporters hoped such public humiliation will help efforts to crack down on prostitution. But opponents said it violated the principle of "Innocent until proven guilty," a key tenet of U.S. criminal law.

"The city is setting out to punish with ridicule people who have not been convicted of anything," said Dick Kurtenbach, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Kansas and western Missouri. "The presumption of innocence is really turned on its head with this scheme."

At a news conference before the broadcast began, city councilwoman Teresa Loar defended the plan that was her brainchild but acknowledged that it was a tough move.

"There is no mercy with this channel. Everyone arrested will appear," Ms. Loar said.

A name and birthdate accompanied each of the 44 mugshots displayed Thursday. Each face appeared for about 20 seconds, along with a disclaimer that read, "this person is innocent until found guilty by a court."

Many of the 44 men stared directly at the camera, while some men were shown averting their gaze.

Financial dealings at the Kansas City Board of Trade slowed down at midday as traders crowded into a viewing room to watch the broadcast out of curiosity. Cheers erupted among the group after one photo aired of a man born in 1922.

"I think it was fun TV, but it trampled on people's rights," said trader Marque Henke. "Still, my hat's off to the 75-year-old guy."

Constitutional law experts acknowledged that those people whose names and faces wind up on television could sue the city but would probably lose any claims alleging defamation or invasion of privacy.

When asked if she was prepared to take the risk that one of the identified people might sue, Ms. Loar said, "We take that chance every day."



China's President Jiang Zemin (right), holding a part of a Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) poem he presented to Mr. Chirac, reacts as French President Jacques Chirac, holding an explanation, makes a point during a function before talks in Beijing. Mr. Chirac is in China on a four-day state visit and will also tour China's booming commercial centre, Shanghai (Reuters photo)

China, France sign joint communique to build ties

BEIJING (R) — China and France signed a joint communique Friday on promoting a partnership into the 21st century, opposing attempts at world domination and urging a ban on fissile material for nuclear weapons.

"At the dawn of the 21st century, the time has come for France and China to prolong this initiative with a long term global partnership aimed at improving French-Chinese relations into a new phase of development," said the communique, signed by French President Jacques Chirac and China's President Jiang Zemin.

The communique, clearly targeting superpower dominance by the United States, crowned Mr. Chirac's state visit that opened Thursday with a rallying cry to make Beijing a major political and business partner into the next century and was sealed by some \$1.8 billion in contracts for French firms.

"The two parties have decided to engage in reinforced cooperation, to foster the march toward multipolarity... and to oppose any attempt at domination in world affairs," the communique said, citing areas of tension around the world.

Mr. Jiang grinned with delight as he handed a poem in his own calligraphy to Mr. Chirac, before signing the communique with the

European head of state who has taken a lead in playing down criticism of China's human rights record and opposing a Western move this year to censure Beijing in the United Nations.

Mr. Chirac gave the Chinese president and Communist Party chief the framed original employment permit of late paramount Deng Xiaoping, who worked in French factories in the early 1920s. Deng died, aged 92, on Feb. 19.

The communique touched on human rights, with the two sides agreeing to take into account each other's "particularities" and China praising Mr. Chirac's decision on U.N. criticism.

In talks Thursday, Jiang described as a "wise decision" French opposition to censuring China over human rights and a Paris decision to curb arms sales to Taiwan.

France's Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette was expected to raise individual human rights cases with China Friday.

In the communique, the world's last two powers to engage in nuclear testing voiced support for the global test ban and urged a swift start to talks on banning production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

At least one high-level bilateral meeting between the two countries would be

held each year with at least two meetings a year between their foreign ministers, the communique said.

It also stressed the importance of trade and investment, pledging to limit obstacles to market access and to boost cooperation in satellite construction and space research.

Mr. Chirac arrived Thursday for a four-day state visit that has already seen the signing of more than \$1.8 billion in business deals, mostly in the aviation sector.

Airbus Industrie won a \$1.5 billion deal to sell 10 A320 and 20 A321 planes to Chinese airlines and signed an agreement to produce in China a 100-seater passenger jet that is expected to net around \$40 billion in sales for the partners.

Sino-French relations soured in the early 1990s over sales of French jet fighters and frigates to China's rival, Taiwan, but have recovered since Paris pledged in 1994 to end arms sales to the island that Beijing considers a rebel province.

"The two parties express their conviction that the establishment of a global French-Chinese partnership will raise the traditional relations of friendship and cooperation that unite the two countries to a new level," the communique concluded.

U.S. defence secretary stresses painful choices to Congress

WASHINGTON (R) — Defence Secretary William Cohen Thursday presented Congress with a new U.S. security plan for minimal troop reductions and weaponry, stressing instead a need for cuts in infrastructure such as expensive military bases.

"He (Cohen) framed it in terms of the tough choices that are necessary in order to come up with the funding and to support the strategy we have for the next 15 or 20 years," Defence Department spokesman Ken Bacon told reporters.

Mr. Bacon spoke to reporters after Mr. Cohen presented the results of the Pentagon's quadrennial defence review to leaders of key congressional committees at a breakfast in his Pentagon office.

Mr. Cohen was silent at a breakfast photo session but defence officials have said the so-called "QDR," due to be made public Monday, calls for new domestic base closings and shrinking costly jet fighter programmes. But it would cut only some 60,000 troops from the 1.4 million-member military.

"It (the QDR) has determined as the secretary said that we are not able right now to make significant changes in our forces structure or the number of people that we have in the military" in order to remain engaged in world affairs, Mr. Bacon told reporters.

The report, which has already drawn criticism from Congress for its call for politically-explosive base closings, and from analysts because it is not sweeping enough, seeks a continued high overseas military presence and arms modernisation into the 21st century.

Bright flowers centred each of three tables in Mr. Cohen's office where he fed breakfast and charts full of figures to about 30 senior lawmakers and staffers from four key security and appropriations committees of the House and Senate.

Mr. Cohen also outlined the plan at a Pentagon lunch for former defence secretaries William Perry, Harold Brown, Dick Cheney, Elliot Richardson and Donald Rumsfeld.

Mr. Cohen, who retired earlier this year as a Republican senator from Maine, was flanked at his breakfast table by Chairman Floyd Spence, a South Carolina Republican, of the House National Security Committee, and Ted Stevens, an Alaska Republican, of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senior Republican and Democratic lawmakers and staff directors from the Senate Armed Services Committee and House Appropriations Committees also attended.

Mr. Cohen has described the QDR results as a compromise to face the realities of growing demands on the military such as fighting wars, keeping the peace and performing humanitarian duties along with saving money to spend on needed arms modernisation for the 21st century.

Some defence analysts have said more sweeping changes are needed, such as completely realigning army divisions. And some have said the expectation of \$250 billion defence budgets for the long-term is unrealistic because of future demands from other federal programmes.

Mr. Cohen emphasised in recent weeks that the death of the Soviet Union had not ended international threats to U.S. security and that more domestic military bases must be shut to save money for new high-tech weapons.

He made clear that the United States would retain its current strategy of being prepared to fight two major regional conflicts at once and will keep 100,000 troops in Europe and another 100,000 in the western Pacific.

Defence officials earlier confirmed a Washington Post report that Mr. Cohen planned to seek a cut of about 60,000 active duty military personnel, 70,000 military reservists and some 80,000 civilian Defence Department personnel.

They said Mr. Cohen had decided to reduce by more than 300 — but not cancel — the planned purchase of air force F-22 and navy FA-18E/F fighter jets in programmes under development by Lockheed Martin Corp. and McDonnell Douglas Corp.

Albania vote again unsure; Vranitzky renews talks

TIRANA (R) — Albanian elections seen as crucial for ending the chaos in Europe's poorest country were in doubt again Friday, just hours after the way had seemed clear, as most political parties threatened to boycott the vote.

European envoy Franz Vranitzky had appeared to have sealed a deal Thursday to get the elections scheduled for the end of June back on track.

The former Austrian chancellor, in the latest round of extended shuttle diplomacy, persuaded parliament in the early hours of Friday to pass a fresh electoral law to overcome objections from political parties.

The elections are seen as vital to make sure that Albania avoids slipping back into the near-anarchy that swept the country in February and March after thousands lost their savings in the collapse of high-risk investment schemes.

But the Socialist Party, the second-largest party in parliament, said it and other parties were unhappy with the new law and might still boycott the vote.

The Socialists are part of a nine-party national unity government, along with the former ruling Democrats of President Sali Berisha, which was installed to help stem the rioting.

"We are unhappy with the passage of this law," said Naim Dokle, chairman of the Socialist Party parliamentary group. "Now we are trying to talk with other parties."

Mr. Vranitzky, on his fifth trip to Albania, decided to stay in the country to make sure the deal stuck after an agreement last week unravelled almost as soon as he left the country.

He was due once more to meet Prime Minister Bashkim Fino in a repeat of Thursday's tough negotiations.

Mr. Vranitzky is acting as a special envoy for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), trying to restore order to the troubled Balkan nation.

Mr. Vranitzky was forced into the latest mission after a previous boycott threat by the Socialists and other parties.

The parties said the earlier law favoured the democrats, which have a large parliamentary majority.

After a sitting that lasted well into the early hours of Friday, parliament passed another law and Democratic Party Chairman Tritan Shehu said the elections would take place as planned on June 29.

Mr. Vranitzky had told the politicians the eyes of the international community were on Albania, and warned that international aid and support might be withdrawn unless a compromise was found that would allow free and fair elections to take place.

"I very clearly said to political leaders...that further delays as far as a compromise on the elections is concerned will not improve the situation and will put into question the international community's willingness to provide economic and financial support," he had said Thursday.

"I have continuously stressed that free and fair elections are the only resolution to the continuous political, economical and security crisis Albania is facing," he said.

Mr. Berisha has still to formally sign a decree calling the elections.

Mr. Vranitzky said that if a compromise deal was not found then the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other international bodies would reconsider their commitment to monitor the elections to ensure they were free and fair.



A bloodied student, injured in the confrontation between police and protesters, is carried away and taken to the hospital. A student demonstration degenerated later in the day into street riots, causing serious damages to private property and injuring several people, including a boy shot in the head, according to witnesses (Reuter photo)

Students, police clash in Haiti; several hurt

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (R) — Hundreds of rioters rampaged through downtown Port-Au-Prince Thursday, setting ablaze buildings, homes and cars after police wounded several students who demonstrated over a school closure.

Riot police fired tear gas and live bullets into the air. Several people were wounded by rocks, beatings or bullets.

"This is a revolution," said an angry rioter throwing a rock through a car window. Demonstrators also surged into the General Hospital, sowing panic and sending administrators fleeing.

General Hospital said there were five seriously wounded, two shot with police bullets. There were no reports of fatalities.

Dozens of people in the streets were bloodied and suffered broken bones, witnesses said. One boy was rushed away, blood pouring from his head. Witnesses initially said he had been shot but other protesters later said he was hit by a

stone. A courthouse and several private homes were set ablaze, forcing people to escape with what belongings they could grab.

Rioters threw rocks at police who tried to regain control by shooting into the air. One elderly woman, Luciana Cedice, was wounded by a stray bullet that entered her house.

The situation remained violent and unpredictable in the late afternoon with police scrambling to secure one area while violence broke out in another. After several hours of clashes, the unrest appeared to stem more from the populace's general anger and frustration than from educational issues.

There is widespread discontent in this Caribbean nation, already the poorest country in the western Hemisphere. Grassroots organisations have protested a government privatisation programme and austerity measures promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other for-

eign donors. Thursday's trouble first flared around the Petion School after it was occupied by about 300 students. The school has been closed since Monday, just before exams, when teachers walked out saying they had not been paid for months.

The students threw rocks, injuring innocent bystanders, witnesses said. Riot police arrived on the scene and fired tear gas inside, and students responded by hurling fuel bombs. Police broke in to arrest students, with several demonstrators being badly beaten and at least two shot, witnesses said.

Police withdrew but trouble flared again, as demonstrators burned cars and threw rocks through shop windows.

Thieves who tried to loot burning homes were beaten by onlookers in the street. Firemen carrying pistols raced in to douse fires only after police dispersed crowds with gunshots.

The hospital was stoned and attacked.

"The mob entered, people were running everywhere destroying everything," said Dr. Harry Jacques Joseph.

City Police Chief Yonel Treuil said he did not believe the students were the only participants in the riots.

"I believe this demonstration is infiltrated by organisations against the IMF," he told reporters.

He said two police officers were hurt by thrown rocks.

Grassroots organisations opposed to President Rene Preval's policies have held a series of protest strikes and threatened to use violence to enforce their message.

Mr. Preval took power in February 1996 after winning an election with the backing of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is a leading critic of his policies.

Mr. Aristide, a champion of the poor, was deposed by a coup in 1991 and restored after three years in exile by a U.S.-led military invasion which ousted the brutal military regime.

Pakistan premier sees India willing to settle disputes

ISLAMABAD (R) —

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said his Indian counterpart Inder Kumar Gujral appeared willing to settle disputes between the two rival neighbouring countries.

"It's a good breakthrough," he told reporters at parliament, referring to the outcome of his meeting with Mr. Gujral Monday on the sidelines of a South Asian summit in the Maldivian capital of Male.

A Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman said at a news briefing that the two prime ministers discussed "all outstanding issues" between the countries, including a 50-year-old dispute over the Himalayan region

of Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr. Sharif said the process of dialogue, resumed in March after a three-year hiatus, was the best way to improve the atmosphere between the nations, which have fought three wars since independence from Britain in 1947, two of them over Kashmir.

"I have seen in the meeting (with Gujral) that he too wants to settle the issues through dialogue," he said.

But he said it would be a time-consuming process and cautioned against expecting any immediate solutions.

"I don't claim that all problems will be solved within 24 hours. It may take months and some years to

solve all the issues with India."

Mr. Sharif and Mr. Gujral, who were in Male to attend a summit of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), decided in their meeting that their most senior diplomats would meet in Islamabad next month and form working groups to discuss issues dividing the two sides.

"We will form working groups on all outstanding issues and will try to find solutions," Mr. Sharif said.

"It's high time for a comprehensive appraisal of what we achieved in the past 50 years," he said. He was referring to a continuing period of hostility since

Pakistan was carved out of the former British India at independence in 1947.

Pakistan, which controls one-third of Kashmir, regards the dispute over the region as the "core issue" between the two nations and wants to settle it through a United Nations-mandated plebiscite.

India, which is fighting a separatist revolt in the two-thirds of Kashmir it rules, rejects the plebiscite formula and regards the whole of the region as its integral part.

Some of the militant groups fighting Indian rule want to reunite Kashmir into an independent state.

S. Korea promises

more corn

aid for North

SEOUL (R) — South Korea Friday pledged additional food aid worth \$10 million to a U.N. appeal for North Korea, and its Red Cross proposed another round of talks with its Northern counterpart on speeding relief deliveries.

The promise of 50,000 tonnes of corn and 300 tonnes of powdered milk is in addition to \$6 million already delivered to the World Food Programme (WFP), which has appealed for 200,000 tonnes of aid worth \$98.5 million.

The United States has pledged \$25 million to the WFP to help stave off famine in the Stalinist nation.

Pyongyang has requested massive food assistance as a condition for joining proposed peace talks with South Korea, the United States and China.

But a South Korean cabinet minister Friday again insisted that large-scale food aid could only be discussed during the four-way peace talks, and blamed Pyongyang's food crisis partly on its huge military spending.

Unification Minister Kwon O-Kie told an international conference in Tokyo that Pyongyang could get more food aid and direct investment from the South by agreeing to talks aimed at establishing a permanent peace to replace the truce that ended the Korean War.

"By starting the four-way talks, we can implement a variety of economic measures, and this includes proposed direct investment," Mr. Kwon said.

He said North Korea spent \$6 billion each year on its military and \$900 million on political propaganda.

"If a fraction of this were used for the North's basic needs, the food situation would improve and the burden on their budget would be reduced significantly," Mr. Kwon said.

His comments were echoed by Unification Ministry spokesman Kang Ho-Yang in Seoul.

"Any further aid will depend on the North's attitude. The North appears to be spending fairly lavishly for a military parade while their citizens are starving," he said, referring to ceremonies last month to mark the 65th anniversary of the founding of the Peoples' Army.

U.S. bill mounts for space station

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (R) — NASA officials said

Thursday they expected Russia to deliver a crucial piece of the international space station project, although the U.S. space agency will go ahead with an alternative that will add up to \$200 million to the U.S. share of the cost.

"I am happy to report that it appears that that funding problem is behind us, international space station programme manager Randy Brinkley told a news conference, Russia previously had difficulty funding construction of a service module to the space station.

But Russian officials obtained funding that would allow its module to be launched in December 1998, he said, and he spoke highly of a general design review involving the station component in which he participated on April 25.

"I consider the successful general design review a major milestone for the programme," Mr. Brinkley said. "That does not mean that the risk has been completely eliminated."

But he also said NASA is going ahead with its own alternative to the Russian module, an interim control module that would replace the service module if it is not delivered.

Building that system and other programme changes, he said, could add \$150 million to \$200 million or more to the U.S. share.

NASA could not meet the additional costs without exceeding a \$2.1 billion per year spending cap imposed by Congress, so the money would be taken from other programmes, Mr. Brinkley said.

The \$60 billion space station programme, first envisioned in 1984 and redesigned repeatedly since, came under fire in Washington in April after NASA said the Russian space agency fell short by about \$140 million in funding needed to keep construction of the service module on track for the December 1998 launch, already a delay from the original plan to launch in April of that year.

Western partners in the station, which is being built by the United States, Russia, several European countries, Canada and Japan, questioned whether Moscow will be able to fulfill its commitment to the expensive project at all.

But Russian space officials announced late last month they had raised 800 billion rubles (\$140 million) to build the module. And Mr. Brinkley said the Russian Space Agency expected to raise another 700 billion rubles this summer.

Mr. Brinkley acknowledged some space station hardware issues need to be resolved in the United States and Russia.

Critics also noted the schedule of space station construction would mean the Russian Space Agency would have to make 14 to 15 unmanned cargo mis-

sions in 1999, compared to its current pace of about three per year.

NASA has until September to decide whether the Russian module will be ready, or risk further delays, Mr. Brinkley said.

But NASA managers tried to set an upbeat tone as they outlined an updated schedule for missions to assemble the station.

"We're very happy this week that we have a new assembly sequence with our international partners," said Kevin Chilton, deputy programme manager for operations.

The two sides were able to clear up other thorny issues surrounding the international programme. Among other things, NASA and the Russian Space Agency agreed that U.S. and Russian astronauts will take turns serving as the space station's commanders. And, after two years of arguing, they agreed English will be the official language of the space station.

NASA officials flatly denied a report in the May 14 issue of Russia's Nezavisimaya Gazeta that Russian and U.S. officials were holding talks on the possibility of using the international space station for military purposes.

Mr. Brinkley said, "it's very inaccurate ... There have been no discussions in that regard. The international space station is a peaceful cooperative research programme."

Sri Lanka troops dig in after taking rebel town

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan troops were consolidating positions Friday, the fourth day of an offensive against Tamil Tiger rebels, after taking a northern rebel-held town, military officials said.

Military officials in the north of the Indian Ocean island told Reuters that police reinforcements had been sent to the town. Ommathai, north of the government-held town of Vavuniya, to help the army secure the newly-captured territory.

Troops, backed by artillery, tanks and helicopter gunships, broke out of their bases in Vavuniya, 220 kilometres north of Colombo,

Tuesday, launching an offensive code-named "Jaya Sikuru," or "Sure Of Victory," into the rebel-held northern Wanni heartland.

"Overnight there was no confrontation" with the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a military spokesman in Colombo told Reuters Friday.

LTTE transmissions monitored by the army Thursday said at least 100 rebels had been killed or wounded in the battle for Ommathai, a Defence Ministry spokesman said.

Army casualties in Ommathai and elsewhere stood at 18 dead and 31 wounded in the four-day-old offensive, he said.

The LTTE are fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in predominantly Sinhalese Sri Lanka's north and east. The government says more than 50,000 people have died in the war, now in its 14th year. The LTTE say the toll is higher.

The clandestine rebel Voice of Tiger radio, monitored in Vavuniya, said Friday that the LTTE had put up stiff resistance at Ommathai to stop the troops' advance.

Residents in Vavuniya said shelling was continuing from military bases there on LTTE positions in the Wanni, the large Swathe of northern rebel-controlled jungle territory.

They said air force planes had also been seen flying towards Wanni from a base at the ancient Sri Lankan capital of Anuradhapura, 50 kilometres south of Vavuniya.

On Thursday, troops advancing from the northern frontline town of Puvrasankulam met stiff resistance from the LTTE at Kuruvikulam, west of Vavuniya, military officials said.

A military official said at least 12 rebels were killed and more were believed wounded in the Kuruvikulam battle. The number of army casualties was not known, he added.

German World War II deserters win recognition

BONN (R) — Fifty-two years after the defeat of Nazi Germany, deserters and conscientious objectors Thursday finally won long-sought parliamentary recognition for rejecting Hitler's war and recompense for their persecution.

After years of wrangling, a large majority in the lower house of parliament voted for a resolution expressing sympathy for the suffering of deserters and conscientious objectors and recognised them as victims of Nazi injustice.

The parliament recalled the plight of many who were condemned to death, executed or sent to concentration camps and granted each of the around 300 objectors still alive a one-off 7,500 mark (\$4,430) compensation payment.

"With this motion we are clearly and unequivocally con-

fessing the wrongs of the German war leadership of the Nazi empire," Justice Minister Edward Schmidt-Jortzig said in a speech released ahead of the parliamentary debate.

"German soldiers were torn between fulfilling their duty and resisting a criminal leadership," he said.

But some deserters have criticised the resolution, calling it a "partial rehabilitation" that stops short of calling on German justice to lift their guilty verdicts.

Critics have said the resolution is marred by one line — a concession to conservatives which says the declaration does not apply to those who deserted to escape punishment for crimes that would be punishable under law today.

New celestial map is changing ideas about age, size of universe

VENICE, Italy (AP) — European astronomers are unveiling the most accurate map yet of the stars — 17 volumes of celestial number-crunching that is already changing ideas about how old and how big the universe really is.

Hundreds of astronomers from around the world flocked to Venice this week for a 4-day symposium devoted to the early results of the Hipparcos Project, named after the ancient Greek who invented astronomy.

Even those who quibble with some of the conclusions agree the Hipparcos Catalogue, as the 3-dimensional, celestial map is called, is a milestone in astronomy.

Already it appears to have resolved — or at least added an intriguing new wrinkle — to one raging debate in the scientific community.

Astronomers have been puzzled by the fact that the most ancient stars seemed several billion years older than the universe itself — a clear impossibility.

The new data from the Hipparcos satellite indicates that the universe is older than we thought and the stars are younger. If the scientists are right, that impossible, perplexing gap has been closed.

According to several studies presented in Venice, both the stars and the universe are now about 11 billion years old. The Hipparcos scientists also say the new data pushes up the size of the universe by 10 to 15 per cent.

Hipparcos, a \$772 million European Space Agency (ESA) project, took 17 years in the making.

"It's not sexy. It's not glamorous. There are no pretty pictures on the front pages of newspapers," said Dr. Jeffrey Linsky, an American Astrophysicist who helped design one of the Hubble space telescope's newest instruments.

"But it really tells us fundamental things about the age of the universe, the history of the galaxy — a lot of neat stuff."

Unlike the glamorous, \$3 billion Hubble, Hipparcos produced no dramatic photos of the heavens — just numbers. Millions and mil-

lions of numbers.

From 1989 to 1993, the Hipparcos satellite orbited the Earth, its grids and detectors slowly scanning the sky, measuring the angles between stars. The results were radioed back to Earth.

It took four more years of number-crunching to produce the map, which is 100 times more accurate than any other celestial survey. To get an idea of just how accurate that is, imagine your vision suddenly became so sharp you could see a little child walking on the

surface of the moon.

"There has never been anything like it," said Dr. Giovanni Bignami, an Italian Astrophysicist who is on the ESA Scientific Advisory Committee.

Scientists involved in the project got an early look at the data and scores of them are presenting their findings at the Venice symposium.

The map — 17 volumes or six CD-Roms of numbers indicating the positions, and motions of more than 118,000 stars — will be published in June as the Hipparcos Catalogue.

And that means the fun — and the fighting — is just beginning.

Astronomers everywhere will be able to use the Hipparcos Catalogue to explore fundamental questions like how and when the universe was born and how it behaves.

The gold, as one scientist put it, is just beginning to be mined.

"It's a massive leap forward in our understanding of what the hell is going on out there," said project scientist Michael Perryman. "But the science of Hippar-

cos doesn't stop here. For the scientific community, it is just beginning."

Space science is fiercely competitive and the scientists in the Hipparcos project are intensely proud that the first such celestial map was produced by Europe.

"For 20 years we played second fiddle to America," said Dr. Lodewijk Woltjer, a Dutch Astrophysicist who heads the ESA Science Advisory Committee. "Now there are areas where we lead."

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Director General:
MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

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Awaiting the November 'surprise'

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by the country's largest two political parties that they would form a coalition government following this year's parliamentary elections is a good omen and a significant indication of how mature political life in the country has become.

Although it is not entirely for the two parties, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) and the National Constitutional Party (NCP), to decide who forms a government in the country, their intention to work together in that direction signifies the extent to which the two parties, the rightist IAF and the centrist NCP, are willing to compromise in order to get to power.

For the two to form a coalition government, they have to win, between them, a comfortable majority in the Lower House. Not only that. They also have to win the confidence of His Majesty the King, who, constitutionally, appoints and dismisses governments.

For the two to win the majority of House seats, they will have to work very hard on their constituencies and to cultivate voters for the November elections. The newly licensed NCP, made by the merger of nine centrist parties, is expected to fare well in the coming elections, if only because its agenda appeals to the average Jordanian. Meanwhile, some IAF leaders have been warning that they might not do as well as they did in the 1993 elections when they won 16 seats. Analysts, however, believe the Islamist party will benefit from the protest votes of those who are frustrated by the pace of the peace process and the absence of any peace dividends.

For the two parties to get the confidence of His Majesty the King, they have to agree on a joint programme that would be in harmony with the King's vision for the future of the country. His vision includes a commitment to and a drive towards greater political pluralism in the country, progress in democracy, respect for human rights, an increased role for the private sector and, last but not least, furthering people's liberties.

At the moment the Islamists oppose peace, continually express reservations over privatisation and are not really the libertarians to identify with. Yet they have shown time and again that they are pragmatic politicians with an eye on power that is not blurred by their ideology.

While the Constitutionals, by virtue of the middle ground they occupy, can afford manoeuvrability, it remains to be seen how far the Islamists will sacrifice ideology for power. That is for the November elections to tell.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i wondered what the present government can do to address the inefficient public administration and said that problems facing the system have accumulated for 75 years now and therefore they are unlikely to be solved by the present administration which has a short mandate in office. Fahed Fakel said the Jordanians have been hearing statements by the government ministers denying that the bloated administration will be streamlined through laying off or retiring a surplus of employees, but the public is yet to hear of practical steps taken to deal with the situation, especially as this government has been given the mandate to do that in the King's letter of designation. The writer said that denying that drastic measures are to be taken to address the situation does not solve the problem and there is need for some measures required to improve the public administration performance. He, nevertheless, cautioned the government against taking drastic and painful measures to address the bloated and inefficient public administration system as such action, he said, would create additional political, security and social problems for the country.

A WRITER for Al Dustour said that the Traffic Department is failing in its duty to deal with the question of Diesel-fuelled vehicles which emit noxious fumes that contaminate the atmosphere. Jihad Momani said that when testing vehicles, before renewing the car's licence, the Traffic Department should prevent vehicles which emit smoke and fumes above the accepted level from being driven. Seldom can one see vehicles moving on the roads with reasonable amounts of fumes spewing out from the exhausts and Jordanians are now accustomed to seeing the smoke filling out the streets and sometimes blocking vision. The writer said he had discovered that some mechanics tend to tamper with the mechanical parts of the vehicles, with the purpose of giving them more speed, by consuming increasing amounts of petrol or diesel oil; hence the additional amounts of fumes from the exhausts. He said that by so doing, they are polluting the air and such action is tantamount to an attempted murder, a crime which the concerned authorities have the duty to prevent.

Jordanian Perspective

'Jordan, fully committed to the peace treaty, expects Israel to remain bound by the same'

TO SAY that Jordanian-Israeli relations are facing perhaps the most serious crisis since the signing of a peace treaty between them in 1984 is an understatement. And no one but the Israeli government bears the full responsibility of the worsening of relations because of its obvious approach to dictate its terms and impose its will on the Arabs.

We would have thought that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was smart and pragmatic enough to understand and appreciate, at least in strict political terms, that Jordan represents the last bridge for Israel to advance its quest for peace in the Middle East (if indeed it is true that the Jewish state is seeking a just, comprehensive and durable peace based on the recognition of Arab territorial and political rights).

But what we have seen since Netanyahu took office in June is a steady pattern of obvious deception. Netanyahu, even before he won elections in May 1996, was very vocal in expressing his determination to develop his country's relations with Jordan. He maintained the same theme at every possible occasion, whether public or private, and at some point we in Jordan actually trusted him to fulfil the commitments his country had undertaken not only in terms of Jordanian-Israeli relationship but also on the Israeli-Palestinian track of negotiations. But the trust was short

lived, as it became obvious that saying something and doing something else (or doing nothing at all) is one of Netanyahu's traits.

No wonder that even his new ambassador to Jordan, Oded Eran, was pushed into resigning simply because he was not keep fully informed on what was going on between Israel and Jordan. (I do have a suspicion that there could be more to the resignation than meets the eye: perhaps the ambassador realised that he faced an uphill task in Amman in terms of building ties when his own government was deceptive. It is no secret that a diplomat's job becomes a nightmare when bilateral ties suffer and in this case, as a result of actions, or non-actions to be more precise, of his own government.)

We should have guessed much earlier that Netanyahu and most other members of his cabinet had no intention to honour the Israeli commitment to provide additional water to Jordan, in line with the peace treaty. Ariel Sharon, Netanyahu's national infrastructure minister, and several other senior water officials and so-called experts in Israel, have been sending signals, implicit and explicit, that they did not like, let alone accept, the idea.

However, receiving the promised water may not be a very pressing priority for Jordan at this point in time. We have

suffered too much from Israel's usurpation of water sources in the region for decades not to be able to wait for a few more months before we get additional water.

But the question here goes beyond the concept of giving water to Jordan. It is one that is raised against the Israeli commitment to agreements it has signed with Jordan. By extension, it also casts serious doubts over the validity of any agreement that Israel might sign with any Arab country. We have already seen Netanyahu backing down on the Oslo agreements with the Palestinians, and our experience over the water has not been different (regardless of the all the lame excuses that Netanyahu had been adopting).

Netanyahu has put Jordan in a very embarrassing situation. We, Jordanians, are fully committed to the peace treaty our country has signed with the state of Israel. We expect Israel to remain bound by the same peace treaty. Nothing more, nothing less.

Having said that, Israel should also appreciate that Jordan's relations with the Jewish state cannot come at the expense of its ties with the Arab World and common Arab causes. And Netanyahu is gravely mistaken if he entertains hopes that he could deal with Jordan as an isolated entity, away from the realities of the serious crises in the Middle East, resulting from his own actions.

By Dr. Musa Keilani

Oil, economics and geology

By Gwynne Dyer

"WE ARE overproducing, yes. But I have contacted everybody and I hope we will have cooperation."

This time, the man giving the sound-bite was Abdullah Salem Al Badri, president of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and oil minister of Libya. Every OPEC president since the late 1970s has voiced the same hope that the cartel might finally show some discipline. They have all been disappointed.

That is why crude oil prices, in real terms, are now lower than they were before the 1973 Middle East war that sent them soaring into the stratosphere. They have fallen by almost 30 per cent since January — benchmark Brent crude oil now sells for just over \$18 a barrel — and there is little chance that the OPEC meeting in Vienna next month will turn the price decline around.

But geology and economics will turn it around, and soon.

In the current issue of "Nature," the respected British science journal, American geologist Craig Bond Hatfield concludes that "the world will probably reach its maximum oil production in the next 15 years." Prices should begin rising steeply well before that.

Hatfield, a professor at the University of Toledo, calculates that even if global oil consumption remained steady, worldwide oil production would go into absolute decline by 2036. But the current surge of economic growth in industrialising Third World countries means their oil consumption is rising fast, so the remaining oil gets depleted much more quickly. The date when total production starts to fall moves up to 2011, only 14 years from now.

That is not when the world runs out of oil entirely, mind you. That date is probably more than a century ahead (though the time when the remaining oil is too valuable as a chemical feed stock for any of it to be burned for fuel is prob-

ably much nearer than that). But 2011 is the date when commercial oil production, after rising steadily for 140 years, peaks, stalls and starts to back down.

The writing is already on the wall, for those who can read. Since 1985, each year's newly discovered oil reserves all around the world have amounted to only about 40 per cent of that year's global oil consumption. So why are prices low and still falling? Because "the market" is an ignorant, short-sighted beast.

The market is very good at panicking in response to this morning's rumours. It is moderately good at guessing next month's prices. But it regards six-month futures as long-term, and five years ahead as a geological time span.

Individual traders may be aware of what is going to happen to oil supplies in the relatively near future, but this knowledge has not yet affected the mob psychology of the market as a whole. So oil prices are historically low —

and given the nature of OPEC, Abdullah Al Badri cannot get them back up, no matter how much he exhorts the members to practice self-discipline.

Looking for self-discipline from OPEC's members is like trying to get coke from a cow. The cartel's collective interests are best served if everybody limits production to keep prices up — but each individual member's interest is best served by raising production and increasing market share.

In a sense, the current low prices are largely OPEC's own fault. OPEC members produce much less than half of the world's oil: 27 million barrels per day out of a global total of 69 million bpd this year. But the cartel accounts for the great bulk of the oil that is traded internationally, and only the OPEC countries can raise and lower their production at will.

In 1985, global oil production was 59.7 million barrels per day," Hatfield wrote in the "Nature" article. "By 1995 it was more than 69 billion bpd." OPEC members accounted for

almost all of the extra production, since the industrialised countries that have major oil reserves — Russia, the U.S., Britain, Canada — are already producing close to the limit of their capacity.

Yet OPEC's total revenues actually dropped in 1995-96 because almost every member cheated on its quota to make more money. Supply was usually a couple of million barrels per day ahead of demand, and price drifted steadily downwards.

Indeed, if a U.N. embargo had not excluded Iraq's large oil production from the world market for the past five years, prices would be even lower than they are. And now Iraq is gradually returning to the market.

OPEC does not work very well because cartels rarely do. But within five years, the coming decline in oil production will have moved from the realm of specialist articles in scientific journals to mainstream common knowledge. And then, even before demand actually outruns supply, oil prices will really start to move up.

How high? Who knows? But an excess of just a couple of million barrels a day in the market has made the price per barrel tumble to historic lows. Would a shortage of a couple of million barrels, or even the certain knowledge of a coming

shortfall, double the price? Triple it? Around 2002-2003, we are going to find out.

We will find out a number of other things at the same time. We will learn to what extent the current high rate of economic growth in so many Third World countries depends on low energy costs.

We will discover if the world's banking system is any better prepared to handle a new flood of "petrodollars" than it was in the 70s, when it craved "recycling" efforts (making huge loans to any country with a fixed address, just to get the money out of the door again) were directly responsible for the debt crisis of the 80s.

And we will find out if "geopolitics" is really more than a bunch of underemployed strategists looking for fat consultancy fees. They talk as though "strategic regions" (i.e. oil-producing areas) are

game, not independent countries entitled to charge the going market rate for their products. They even hint that too high a price might be brought down by military force, if you have enough of it.

Personally, I think they are stuck in a 19th-century time-war. Military force was not applied to oil prices even back in the 70s, when the world was a much more militant and militarised place.

'Improving camps residents' living conditions is not linked with the settlement of refugees in Jordan'

REVIEWED BY
ELIA NASRALLAH

THE LOCAL Arabic dailies this week gave prominence to the fate of the Palestinian refugees, in light of reports about conspiracies to settle them permanently in the Arab countries hosting them. Other issues included the Middle East question and domestic affairs.

A writer for Al Ra'i daily said that the U.S. administration has prepared plans for settling the Palestinian refugees in Jordan and the other Arab territories hosting the refugees since 1948.

The conspiracy also entails transferring refugees from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank and to Jordan, without any regard to the rights and feelings of the people who have suffered from displacement for the past 50 years, said Tayseer Zibri.

It is clear that the U.S. and Israel are intent on creating a substitute homeland for the Palestinians outside their national homeland and settling the refugees in the Arab World so as to save Israel the trouble of accepting the idea of repatriating any of the refugees.

The writer called for the Jordanians to express their resistance to this looming danger and the idea of a substitute Palestinian entity with all their force and with all means available to them.

A writer for Al Dustour commented on the government's declared plans to improve the conditions of the residents of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan by stressing that these refugees, holding Jordanian citizenship and being tax payers, have all the right to services offered by the government.

As long as they enjoy Jordanian citizenship, they should benefit from the general services offered to the rest of the Jordanians without any discrimination, said Orabi Rintawi.

Referring to the government's plans to carry out a social safety net programme by which JD 173 million will be spent on the camps to improve their residents' living conditions, the writer said that this is a very essential service to the refugees who have lived in despicable conditions for many years.

The camps residents constitute only 40 per cent of the total refugees living in Jordan, said the writer, and there can be no justification for the rumours claiming that improvement of their living conditions and services are linked with the settlement of refugees in Jordan.

Hussein Abu Rumman, a writer for Al Ra'i, tackled the same topic, stressing that the refugees with Jordanian citizenship are entitled to services offered by the government.

The paper said that the U.S. is witnessing continued Israeli knowledge of the American biased attitude towards the Jewish state.

The writer described the peace process as a very sick patient who cannot be cured by a doctor who does not want to provide the right medicine.

The U.S., which represents this doctor, is satisfied with watching the sick man die at a time when the Arabs are shedding tears over the situation and Israel rejoices seeing the end draw near.

Al Ra'i daily said that unless the U.S., the Middle East peace broker, undertook serious measures to stop Israel's settlement programmes, it would be futile to continue sending its envoy, Dennis Ross, to the region.

The paper said that the U.S. is witnessing continued Israeli

member of Parliament, said that the Israelis have failed to give Jordan its share of water, as provided for in the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty, adding that all Jordanians realise this fact, except for the minister (whose name was withheld), who refuses to admit that a crisis exists.

By announcing that only a portion of the water share agreed on in that treaty will be pumped to Jordan in the coming three years, the Israelis have succeeded in changing the provisions of that treaty, exactly as it is doing with the U.N. resolutions, including Resolution 242, said the writer.

She said that by agreeing with Israel's desires, Jordan is encouraging the Jewish state to go back on its commitments in all other issues.

A writer for Al Ra'i tackled the question of poverty and said that the government has announced plans to deal with this issue but to date it has done nothing, except giving the public promises.

Sultan Hattab said that the Kingdom is hosting 300,000 non-Jordanian workers who can be replaced by local job seekers through a well planned programme which offers Jordanians the chance to short-term vocational training programmes, on the one hand, and fixes the minimum wages of Jordanians taking up the jobs, on the other.

The writer said that the government should not suffice itself with promises and advise the young people to take up jobs done by non-Jordanian workers, it should start by focusing its attention on replacing the guest workers with Jordanians, tackling one area or trade at a time and moving gradually to other trades.

He said that the government has to start somewhere and has to enforce the law to ensure that only Jordanians work in their country.

Toujan Faisal, who is also a

LETTERS

Reform protection laws

To the Editor:

WITH THE passage of time, last year's murder of Hanin and Hani was forgotten and after public sentiments have cooled down, only the bitter memories remained haunting us. Many of us hoped that a tragedy of this kind, totally in contradiction with our values and norms of community life, will never happen again, yet it did.

Rana Hussein, on May 14, sent again a "shock wave" to the public by reporting on the case of a man who kills his wife and four children in a most cold-blooded, premeditated and execution-like manner. According to the source, the offender commits this ugly crime in the name of "honour", as he merely suspects his wife is having an immoral relationship and his children are not his.

What on earth is "honour" in the mind of a person who is capable of shooting innocent children at close range? Crimes of "honour" in Jordan are not isolated cases. As a matter of fact, in a male-dominated society such as ours, they are happening all the time and getting to be an ordinary event, thus attracting the curious attention of the foreign media too. In most cases, very young women are subjected to false or unconfirmed accusations concerning their morals, resulting in murder or other gruesome acts of violence. Male offenders receive a "hero-like" treatment, which encourages others to follow suit whenever a similar situation arises in order to save the family's "honour from disgrace". The prescribed punishment by the law for such crimes does not exceed two years, making it easy for offenders to survive and never feel repentant for what they did.

His Majesty King Hussein, in his address to army officers Wednesday, expressed his apparent outrage and disgust at the Karak crime, comparing it to the border shooting that offended the nation's image and honour.

Crimes of "honour" also distort the image of the Jordanian citizens and cause irreparable damage to their reputation as peace-loving and tolerant by nature. Jordan has embarked on social reform and development and certainly cannot afford obstacles on the road to progress and success. Hopefully, law makers will seriously consider the implementation of reforms in the prosecution procedures and laws so as to really protect the physical and psychological integrity of women and children. If this is not done soon enough, more injustice could be committed in a society where all are equal in the eyes of God and justice must be served only by the proper authorities.

Rumiana Nuselbeh,

New survey evidence sheds light on regional role of Chalcolithic era Teleilat Ghassul

By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

Following is the second of two articles on Teleilat Ghassul, which, besides adding new information on the regional role of the village, also tries to shed light on its abrupt demise and the fate of its culture and people:

THE ANCIENT settlement of Teleilat Ghassul, just off the northeast coast of the Dead Sea, has long been appreciated as one of the largest and most important settlements in the Levant during the Chalcolithic Period (c. 4500-3600 BC). The Chalcolithic ("copper-stone") era represents an important transitional stage of human civilisation, in between the world's earliest farming and livestocking villages of the previous Neolithic era and humankind's first walled towns that appeared in the Early Bronze Age.

While Pontifical Biblical Institute (Jerusalem) and Sydney University (Australia) excavations since 1929 have documented the main settlement at Teleilat Ghassul as a major Chalcolithic cultic centre, its relationship with its regional hinterland has been less well understood. This has started to change following a 1996-97 survey by American scholar Sandra Scham. Her findings add new information to the already lively debate about the regional role of Chalcolithic Ghassul, the reasons for its abrupt demise, and the fate of its "Ghassulian" culture and people.

Ms. Scham, a PhD candidate at the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. who had previously studied Chalcolithic sites and cultural artefacts in Palestine and Israel, planned her project in Jordan with the aim of identifying satellite hamlets and settlements or transient pastoral camps in Ghassul's hinterland. She surveyed the seven-kilometre-long stretch of land extending from Ghassul eastwards to Tell Iktanu, along the banks of the Wadi Ajlun, with special emphasis on the area within a kilometre radius around Teleilat Ghassul itself.

Surveying an area of some 95 hectares on foot, she and Department of Antiquities representative Mohammad Balawneh collected over a hundred baskets and bags of diagnostic pottery shards and stone tools. By far, the largest concentration of artefacts came from the area immediately north of Teleilat Ghassul, she told the Jordan Times in a recent interview in Amman.

The distinctive hand-moulded Ghassulian pottery, characterised by a coarse, poorly fired fabric with much whitish grit and sparse decoration, was found along most of the survey area, including at and around Tell Iktanu. The diagnostic shards included some with appliqué, painted, and incised decoration, mat-imprinted bases, body shards, handles, spouts and rims. The diagnostic pottery is predominantly Chalcolithic, with only a few shards from the Late Neolithic and Byzantine periods.

A similar pattern characterised the stone tools that were found, including whole chisels, fan scrapers, choppers, grinding stones, points and other implements.

Most of the stone tools dated from the Chalcolithic period, with a few from the periods immediately before and after (the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, respectively). Not surprisingly, both pottery and lithic materials were found in higher concentrations immediately around the settlements at Ghassul and Tell Iktanu, with less intense scatters in the areas in between.

Along the perimeter of the main Ghassul settlement, 1.5 to 4 kilometres away, the most common artefacts recovered were limestone bowls, grinding stones, querns, stone chisels and other implements that suggest agricultural and village life, rather than pastoral nomadism. One of Ms. Scham's preliminary conclusions from the surface evidence is that "numerous satellite settlements and farming hamlets existed along the wadi from Ghassul to Iktanu."

Some settlements may still have Chalcolithic era architectural remains beneath the surface, she said, though most of the visible buried structures are probably early Ottoman in date.

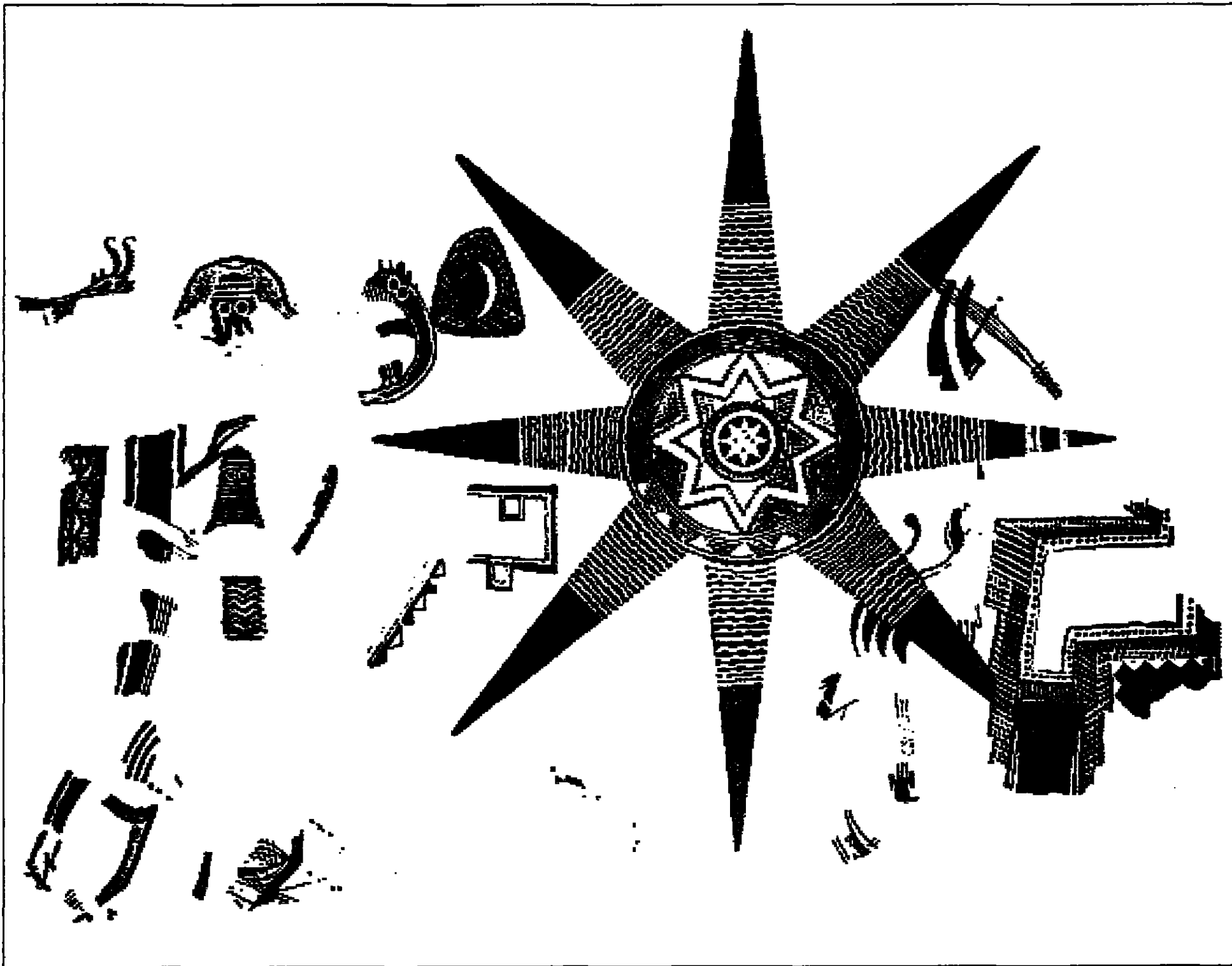
The importance of pastoralism

The overall regional survey showed occurrences of flint tool scatters further away from Ghassul, at between two and seven kilometres distance, suggesting either "pastoral stations" where nomadic herders may have stopped briefly or flint-knapping sites where stone tools were manufactured. The evidence from the distribution of sites, according to their presumed function, Ms. Scham said, suggests that Ghassulian society may have included a stronger component of nomadic pastoralism than had been assumed to date.

A stronger pastoral element in Chalcolithic times would help to explain the strong uniformity in Chalcolithic culture throughout the Levant, she said. It seems likely that as Chalcolithic era people recognised the secondary utility of herd animal products, mainly from goats and sheep, nomadism would have quickly expanded as a way of life and an economic base for small communities. This would have sparked much greater movement of people and interaction of local cultures within the Levant, partly explaining why common Chalcolithic pottery forms are found throughout the region.

The cultic nature of Teleilat Ghassul as a place of pilgrimage is becoming more clear. Material remains that are generally seen as "ritual hardware" associated with such a cultic centre (amulets, pottery figurines, basalt bowls) were found within a radius of some three kilometres of the main settlement, at smaller hamlets, farms, and pastoral sites. Some cultic items, though, such as small stone figurines, have only been found at Ghassul itself, and not in outlying areas.

The picture of Teleilat Ghassul that emerges from the combination of Ms. Scham's survey and the previous international excavations is that of a large cultic centre with areas of crafts specialisation within the settlement, surrounded by numerous smaller hamlets and



The famous 'star fresco', one of several rare Chalcolithic era wall paintings excavated at Teleilat Ghassul earlier this century, is one reason why scholars attribute a regional cultic role to the large village site

farms, all of whose inhabitants interacted regularly with pastoral nomads who ranged further afield than the immediate vicinity around Ghassul.

Reasons for demise

If Ghassul was primarily a Chalcolithic cultic centre and a place of pilgrimage, rather than a self-reliant typical farming and livestocking village, its demise and abandonment become slightly less perplexing, Ms. Scham suggested. Both earthquake damage and desertification may have prompted the Ghassulians to abandon their settlement and move east. Evidence for such an explanation is controversial, but intriguing.

The Australian excavations have already documented that the site suffered frequent earthquake damage in antiquity; some Chalcolithic period wall paintings show signs of having been painted over more than 20 times, while most house floors indicated either continual rebuilding or seasonal occupation. If one were also to look for psychological explanations, perhaps the worshippers of Ghassul became fed up with continually rebuilding or repairing their buildings after earthquakes, and also may have interpreted the recurring earthquakes as bad omens. Relocating a sacred building, in such circumstances, would be a logical response.

Ghassul now sits within a barren, dry, harsh landscape that does not seem a likely environment for such an important settlement of its time. Ms. Scham believes there may be two explanations for this. She notes that other Chalcolithic sites are found today in relatively

dry environments, such as the Jordan Valley and Wadi Rum, that were probably wetter and more hospitable in the past. Or, the Ghassulians may have used irrigated agriculture that allowed them to farm in areas that seem too dry today for productive agriculture (just as irrigated agriculture today is transforming some inhospitable parts of the Jordan Valley into productive zones with growing towns and villages).

Eastward migration?

The presence of numerous Early Bronze Age settlements and artefacts along the wadi east of Ghassul suggests that the Ghassulians did not simply vanish into thin air, but steadily moved closer to the greener foothills and their sources of water. Perhaps, Ms. Scham suggests, the Ghassulian settlement moved eastwards and established a new cultic centre at Tell Iktanu, which shows evidence of a large Early Bronze Age settlement. Tell Iktanu has been excavated by Dr. Kay Prag of Manchester University Museum, U.K., and Ms. Scham believes that further excavations may uncover a shrine there from the transition period between the Late Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age.

Ms. Scham's fieldwork in Jordan has been funded by a United States Information Agency fellowship, and carried out in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities and the American Centre of Oriental Research. She does not plan to do any more surveying in the area, but hopes to return one day to excavate some of the satellite settlements near Tell Iktanu that show Chalcolithic remains.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNICAL COLLEGES FOR THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE

The Palestinian Authority, acting through the Ministry of Higher Education, has received a grant from the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Republic towards the cost of the "The Development of Technical Colleges for the Palestinian Authority," and intends to utilise a portion of the proceeds of this grant to fund eligible payments under the contracts resulting from this invitation to bid. The Palestinian Authority has agreed and the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin, Italy has accepted, that the ILO/Turin (hereinafter referred to as the "Purchaser Representative") will assist the purchaser with the procurement of goods and related services under this invitation to bid.

The Ministry of Higher Education of Palestinian Authority now invites sealed bids from eligible for the supply of the following five packages for three technical colleges namely Al Aroub, Tulkarem and Ramallah.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Bid Package No.1: | Language laboratories, typewriting classrooms, office equipment and furniture. |
| Bid Package No.2: | Workshop and civil engineering equipment. |
| Bid Package No.3: | Training Aids: wall charts, video courses, cut-away models, trainers in electrical/electronics, educational software, transparencies. |
| Bid Package No.4: | Local area networks, computing equipment and software. |
| Bid Package No.5: | Kitchen equipment. |

Prospective bidders may obtain further information from and inspect the bidding documents at the respective addresses indicated below (Local Bidders at the Ministry of Higher Education, Foreign Bidders at the ITC/ILO, Turin).

A complete set of the Bidding Documents or any package may be obtained by any interested bidder on submission of a written application to the addresses below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of U.S.\$ 50.

Only bidders who purchase the Bidding Documents in their names are eligible for submission of bids. Applicants who wish to receive the Bidding Documents by courier should arrange payment of courier fees separately. In case of dispatch by mail or any other mode, the purchaser cannot be held responsible for late delivery or loss of the documents mailed to the prospective bidder.

All bids must be accompanied by a security of two per cent of the respective bid value in the form presented in the Bidding Documents and must be delivered to the ILO/Turin office indicated below on or before 10:00 a.m. (Turin time) on July 7, 1997. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who chose to attend at 10:00 a.m. (Turin time) on the same date at the ILO/Turin office.

The Purchaser Representative
The International Training Centre of the ILO,
Procurement Management and Training Unit,
125 Corso Unita d'Italia,
10127 Turin, Italy
Tel.: (39 11) 69 36 783
Fax: (39 11) 69 36 351
E-mail: PROC@itcilo.it

The Purchaser
Palestinian National Authority,
Ministry of Higher Education,
Ramallah,
Tel.: +972(2)998 78 30, 995 44 90
Fax: +972(2)998 78 33, 995 45 18

Interest rates will not be affected Central Bank of Jordan will keep dinar-dollar exchange rate unchanged

By Samir Ghawi

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) will not exert any influence to bring up the interest rates on the dinar nor will it change the fixed dollar-dinar exchange rate in response to the higher value of the dollar on international markets and the expectations of analysts of a further rise in U.S. interest rates.

In a telephone interview with Walid Khairallah, a CBJ deputy governor, the senior Central Bank official said the interest rates in Jordan had no relation to those in the U.S. and the fixed exchange rate had been in force for the past two years and there is no intention to change it.

When interest rates on the dinar were moving up over the past months, bankers and analysts were saying that the reason was to give dinar

holders better advantage over those who held U.S. dollar deposits. They said the higher interest on dinar will encourage Jordanians to shift from U.S. dollar positions into local currency to benefit from the four or five points interest difference between the two currencies.

The Federal Reserve (U.S. central bank) recently pushed up the interest rate on the dollar and all indications point to another increase later this month. Interest rates on sterling also went up last week as the new Labour government opted for that choice instead of raising taxes.

According to Mohammed Saleh Jaber, a columnist and an economic analyst, had it not been for the Central Bank fixing the dollar-dinar rate at 709 fils in October 1995, the rate

would have been 770 fils today. The moneychangers would even be quoting a rate of 800 fils now, the analyst said pointing out that the moneychangers would be emphasising the weakness of the dinar and not the strength of the dollar.

Dr. Jaber said that the Jordanian dinar has improved internationally for its link with the dollar and that the dinar will strengthen further if predictions that the dollar will reach 1.80 Deutschmarks and 130 yen are realised. As such, he asked:

"Will we reach the point that the dinar exceeds its real value not because of core factors justified by economic realities but because of a transitory monetary policy that linked the dinar with the dollar instead of a basket of currencies as the case has been before?"

Dr. Jaber stressed that this issue should be stud-

ied carefully from all sides and its effects on the competitiveness of the Jordanian economy well examined. He explained that the appreciation of the Jordanian dinar will contribute greatly to the price stability locally and to lower inflation. But, he argued, the higher dinar value should also be compared to the possibility of higher consumption, higher imports and higher deficit in the trade balance in addition to the pressure on the foreign currency reserve and the retreat in Jordan's financial standing.

The analyst recommended the remedy of "reflation" or forced inflation to neutralise the negative aspects of real appreciation in the value of the Jordanian dinar. Otherwise, he pointed out, we might be forced to modify the dinar-dollar exchange rate fixing which has provided monetary stability until now.

Jordan to float \$70m government bonds on world markets before end of this year

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) will in the coming four to five months offer Jordanian government bonds worth \$70 million to potential investors on the world markets, according to deputy CBJ governor Michael Marto.

Dr. Marto, who made the announcement at the conclusion of a Jordanian investment seminar which ended in London Thursday evening, said that the bonds will be the first issue of its kind by the Kingdom which he said hopes to introduce facilities to ensure continued flow of liquidity through treasury bonds.

The investment seminar, which was organised by a Swiss bank to help Jordan attract investments, was attended by Jordanian business people representing various sectors in addition to potential investors from Europe.

Industry and Trade Minister Hani Mulki addressed the seminar in his presentation focusing on policies and reforms which Jordan had introduced during recent

months within the framework of the new regional environment.

"It is important to remember that peace, political stability and regional security are the necessary conditions for sustainable economic development," said Dr. Mulki adding: "It is in this context that Jordan is committed to peace and stability and that it emphasises its desire to create an investor-friendly climate."

He said: "We in Jordan are moving forward to put the dream into reality, counting on your positive support and action which in itself will overcome the challenges and help to usher in a new era. A new regional political and economic reality needs to be established which will positively reflect on the performance of national economies in the Middle East."

"Economic restructuring and reform has been a major component of our effort," Dr. Mulki indicated. "At present, Jordan's economy is undergoing such a process at both the macro and sectoral levels. It is hoped that within

the next few years, the Jordanian economy will reach a level of self-sustainability, when it will no longer be in need of support to finance its balance of payments deficit."

Referring to exports, he said: "The export platform of Jordan's manufacturing bases is continuously being raised in both quantitative and qualitative terms thus ensuring that our export-led growth is a sustainable one, especially at a time when Jordan is becoming an active member of the global economy."

The minister added: "We have already initiated the process of acceding to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and initiated the new partnership agreement with the European Union. We also have concluded free trade area agreements with a number of Arab countries aimed at integrating the Jordanian economy with the region as the government is vigorously pursuing a wide range of legislative and regulatory reforms and strengthening investment incentives."

"Several important business laws have been com-

pleted and passed including the new securities law which will separate the regulatory and operational functions of the Amman Financial Market. The companies law has been amended to facilitate the activities of companies and the new customs law will be consistent with the WTO. In fact the national economic agenda of Jordan can best be fulfilled through the creation of a proper and effective model for regional economic cooperation," Dr. Mulki pointed out.

In conclusion he said: "We view regional economic project as a model. It is only through such a scheme that we can jointly develop the Jordan Rift Valley, build regional airports, water storage systems, railroad networks and tourism parks. Regional cooperation can prove to be the means to attract foreign investments and therefore to sustain economic growth at both the regional and national levels. Your role in this process is an essential component to the success of this endeavor."

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NGN	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6620	0.6105	1.4215	115.65	1.3723	1669.00	1.5030	5.6965
DE Mark	0.5910	1.0000	0.3805	0.8400	68.35	0.6106	885.82	1.1246	3.3661
GB Sterling	1.6361	2.7702	1.0000	2.3490	189.05	2.2480	2733.99	3.1173	9.3364
CH Franc	0.7035	1.1895	0.4290	1.0000	81.34	0.9647	1173.28	1.3407	4.0067
JP Yen	0.0085	1.4618	0.5272	1.2281	1.0000	1.1856	14.42	184.41	4.8240
CA Dollar	0.7287	1.2324	0.4448	1.0356	1.19	1.0000	1215.67	1.3845	4.1495
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0126	0.3662	0.0851	1445.50	0.8212	1.0000	11.39	3.4108
NL Guilder	0.5255	88.87	0.3205	74.89	60.73	0.7207	876.58	1.0000	2.9934
FR Franc	0.1755	0.2967	0.1070	24.9277	20.27	0.2406	33.37	33.3700	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NGN	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6620	0.6105	1.4215	115.65	1.3723	1669.00	1.5030	5.6965
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	2.3973	0.8323	5.1415	428.69	5.1673	2172.32	4.7874	14.0637
GB Sterling	0.2688	0.4488	0.1005	0.97	0.0806	0.98	410.08	0.9037	2.6830
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	4.4785	1.5959	12.4102	1.2471	12.65	12.15	5089.18	0.9311
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.4645	0.1033	0.1033	0.0830	1.01	422.50	0.9311	2.6830
Kuwait Dinar	3.3090	5.60224	2.01979	4.70588	382.995	4.70588	382.995	0.9311	2.6830
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.4645	0.1033	0.1033	0.0830	1.01	422.50	0.9311	2.6830
Lebanese 1000	0.65	1.0803	0.4051	2.3688	0.1965	2.3879	2.2038	0.9311	2.6830
Egyptian	0.2950	0.2088	0.1065	0.1112	1.0740	0.0892	1.0836	453.76	1.0000

Energy									
Oil	Last	High	Low	Open	Close	Settle	Settle	Settle	Settle
Brent	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80
W. Texas	21.25	21.30	21.30	21.30	21.30	21.30	21.30	21.30	21.30
Bonny	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80	19.80
Dubai	18.53	18.53	18.53	18.53	18.53	18.53	18.53	18.53	18.53
U.S. Gas	190.00	190.00	190.00	190.00	190.00	190.00	190.00	190.00	190.00

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NGN	FRF
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4514	0.16277	0.37929	30.8632	0.37929	30.8632	0.37929	30.8632
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46098	0.16622	0.38733	31.5169	0.38733	31.5169	0.38733	31.5169
KW Dinar	3.3090	5.60224	2.01979	4.70588	382.995	4.70588	382.995	0.9311	2.6830
BH Dinar	0.3769	0.62224	0.21979	1.81943	147.901	1.81943	147.901	0.9311	2.6830
CY Pound	1.9791	3.3486	1.2078	2.8133	228.883	2.8133	228.883	0.9311	2.6830

Metal Prices									
Metal	Bid	Offer	Settle	Settle	Settle	Settle	Settle	Settle	Settle
Gold (oz's)	344.4	344.9	344.9	344.9	344.9	344.9	344.9	344.9	344.9
Silver (oz's)	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7
Platinum (oz's)	390.75	391.75	391.75	391.75	391.75	391.75	391.75	391.75	391.75
AL (3 Months)	1667	1668	1668	1668	1668	1668	1668	1668	1668
CU (3 Months)	2466	2469	2469	2469	2469	2469	2469	2469	2469
Zinc (3 Months)	1347	1349	1349	1349	1349	1349	1349	1349	1349
Lead (3 Months)	627	630	630	630	630	630	630	630	630
Ni (3 Months)	7810	7830	7830	7830	7830	7830	7830	7830	7830

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	5 Years	10 Years
USD	5.59	5.53	5.56	6.02	6.15	6.15	6.15	6.15	6.15
GBP	6.18	6.31	6.50	6.89	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75
JPY	0.39	0.42	0.47	0.70	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84
DEM	2.95	3.05	3.10	3.07	3.24	3.24	3.24	3.24	3.24
FRF	3.22	3.29	3.38	3.39	3.41	3.41	3.41	3.41	3.41
CHF	1.46	1.55	1.73	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82
ITL	6.80	6.74	6.65	6.63	6.52	6.52	6.52	6.52	6.52

Main Equity Indices									
Source	Index	Value	Change	High	Low	Open	Close	Settle	Settle
New York	DOW JONES	7269.26	-64.29	7336.43	7262.25	7262.25	7262.16	7262.16	7262.16
New York	S&P 500	835.81	-6.07	838.28	835.43	835.43	835.04	835.04	835.04
London	FT-SE 100	4683.9	12.7	4723.7	4686.7	4686.7	4681.2	4681.2	4681.2
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20566.31	-153.41	20622.2	20565.0	20565.0	20562.7	20562.7	20562.7
Paris	CAC 40	2784.28	8.27	2804.51	2771.69	2771.69	2776.01	2776.01	2776.01
Frankfurt	DAX	3562.11	-11.58	3570.74	3554.83	3554.83	3573.69	3573.69	3573.69

THE Daily Crossword

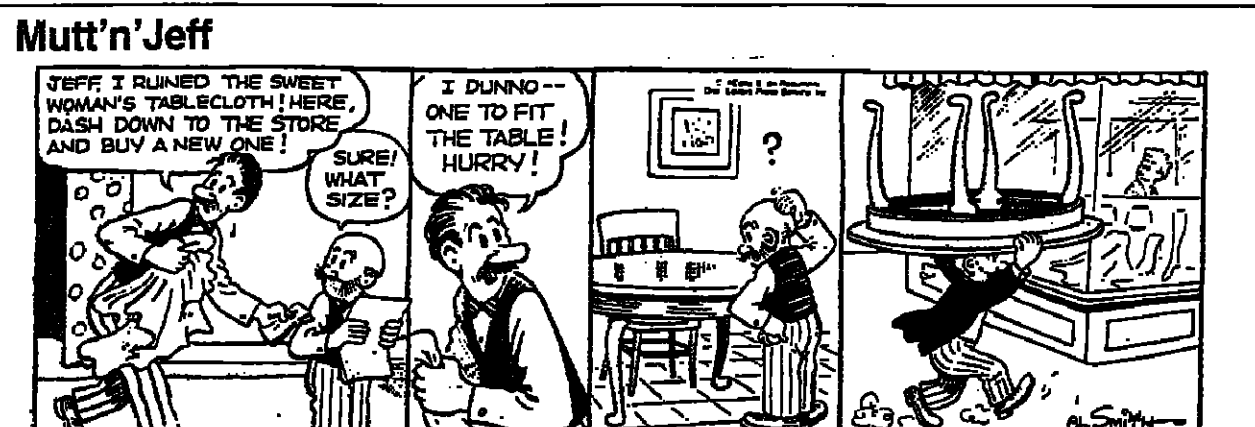
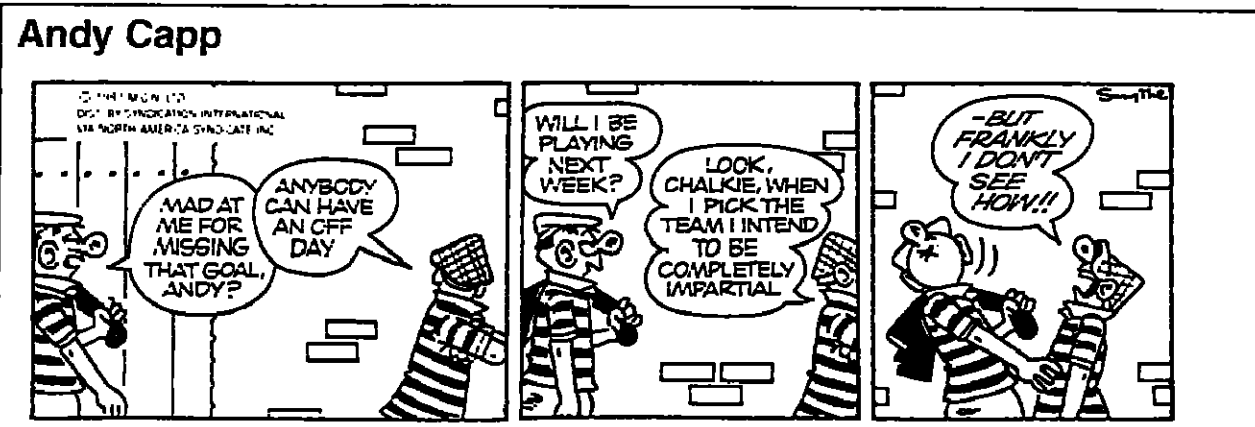
ACROSS

- Division of a town
- Multiple choice letters
- Balboa's homeland
- Author James
- Urgent
- Distant orbiter
- All shook up
- Samuel's teacher
- Loudness units
- Rio Grande feeder
- Burgundy, et al.
- Adjudge
- Ingest
- Reject, in a way
- Gibbon, e.g.
- Early supercontinent, perhaps
- Govt. org.
- Hip or tip ending
- 1990 Gere film
- Amuse
- Aviv
- Popular campaign promise
- Hot — pistol
- Suit
- Med. examiner, abbr.
- Weird
- Certain young woman
- Testiness
- Peyton or Melrose
- Modern phone feature
- Residents: suff.
- A-OK gesture
- Loaves
- Crimson root
- Stone Age abode
- Luminaries
- Cay
- Towards shelter

DOWN

- Hip boot
- Mentally alert
- Suburban
- neighborhood
- Calendar abbr.
- Marketers
- Good Books
- Hybridizes, in botany
- Certain young woman
- Testiness
- Peyton or Melrose
- Modern phone feature
- Residents: suff.
- A-OK gesture
- Loaves
- Crimson root
- Stone Age abode
- Luminaries
- Cay
- Towards shelter

by Chuck Deodene



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, MAY 17, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your ideas may seem rather wild today, however you can prove successful and make your life more interesting if you just consider all your options. Later this evening seek out the advice of a bigwig to complete any project.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Some rather strange suggestion you get today could prove helpful if you follow the directions to the letter. A financial matter later this evening may lead to a pot of gold, so be sure you dig in the right location.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If a change in association matters occurs today, this could help you to attain your goals, so be alert to any suggestions. Later this evening you can stay at home with your loved ones and simply relax for the day ahead.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Try a different approach today at your career activities and thereby you can gain much success. Have a conversation with another knowledgeable person who has different ideas from yours and thereby have some other insight.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) A good friend can give you a good suggestion today on how best to get your fine talents working, so listen carefully and follow any ideas provided. Later this evening you can proceed with tasks assigned from those in authority.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Be sure to handle today your responsibilities in the business world and thereby gain prosperity and success. The evening can be happy at home with your loved ones, so make whatever effort is needed to make them respond.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Your institution and mature judgement needs to be better organized if you are to accomplish the most today and get the eye of a bigwig. Later this evening you can meet with close friends and have fun together out on the town.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Do something unusual and very helpful at home today, thereby you can gain the respect and admiration of those under your roof. You have a happy evening there and can retire feeling content through your efforts.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Concentrate on the various persons who can assist you in the outside world and thereby explore new activities. Later this evening can be spent with your mate being romantic with him or her and showing much affection.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Keep rooted to your career activities today and don't permit a private concern to deter you in gaining more assets. Tonight you can seek out the advice of a knowledgeable person and with the assistance of fellow associates proceed.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Make plans today for a good time with close friends and loved ones in the days ahead. Don't permit a stubborn fellow associate to dissuade you from following through with the ideas presented by a knowledgeable person.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Place your family ahead of any public outlet today and thereby you can receive quite a lot of recognition for your efforts. An outsider could give you the wrong slant this evening on how to get ahead so be cautious.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

Industry shares contributes to high trade volume at AFM

AMMAN (J.T.) — Trade volume at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) soared last week when 73,617 Jordan Phosphate Mining Company (JPMC) shares worth JD242,853 were purchased by a foreign investor on Monday. Also during the week, dealings were carried out involving 26,250 Jordan Ceramic Industries (JCI) shares worth JD186,375 and 50,250 International Tobacco (I.T.) shares worth 60,293. On Tuesday, another 60,153 JPMC shares worth JD197,495 and 60,420 Arab Potash Company (APC) shares worth JD367,732 in addition to 56,750 I.T. shares worth JD68,035 gave the industry sector an even larger size of the AFM pie. As a result, industry captured 65.03 per cent of the total trade volume and the sector's price index registered a 4.5 point increase (3.9 per cent).

In general, trade at the AFM went up from JD4.0 million to JD4.5 million (12.5 per cent increase) with a total of 2.9 million shares traded in 2,405 contracts.

On a sectoral level, trade volume in the banking sector registered JD1.16 million (25.93 per cent), the service sector JD0.4 million (8.91 per cent) and the insurance sector JD5.700 (0.13 per cent). The price index registered a new record at close reaching 154.17 points in comparison to the week before when it registered 150.76 points, translating into a 3.4 point increase (2.3 per cent).

The banking and finance sector registered a new record with an increase of two points (1.1 per cent) and the service sector went up 3.3 points (3.2 per cent), whereas the insurance sector decreased by 0.7 points (0.6 per cent).

Of the 87 companies whose shares were traded last week, share prices of 44 companies increased, 28 companies decreased and 15 held steady.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

General Arabia Insurance Company distributing dividends at a rate of 10%

** THE GENERAL Arabia Insurance Company is distributing JD200,000 in cash dividends to shareholders following the approval of the general assembly to distribute dividends at a rate of 10 per cent. Board chairman Rajat Muasher told the shareholders that the company was able to maintain the same level of production in 1996 compared to that in 1995 despite stiff competition and the increase in the number of insurance companies in the market. Such a situation resulted in lower insurance premiums and in wider spread of risk coverage among a higher number of companies, Dr. Muasher pointed out.

The company earned a total of JD2,874,356 last year (JD2,870,204 in 1995) but the gross profit amounted to JD470,500 of which JD282,397 were profits from insurance operations (JD24,400 in 1995) and about JD111,000 profit from the sale of real estate. According to the annual report the net profit amounted to JD217,245.

The 1996 financial report showed the following:

- Cash increased from JD0.58 million at the end of 1995 to JD1.59 million due to increase in capital last year.
- Total investments increased by 26 per cent or JD0.71 million as they went up from JD2.74 million to JD3.46 million.
- Total outstanding claims for 1996 amounted to JD1.06 million, 11.2 per cent or JD106,805 higher than the 1995 total. Outstanding claims for cars accounted for 68 per cent and for marine 17 per cent.
- Technical reserves amounted to JD1.53 million, slightly higher than the 1995 total of JD1.52 million.
- Total assets rose by 40 per cent from JD4.49 million to JD6.30 million at the end of 1996 due to a 35 per cent increase in the capital and a five per cent rise in the company's operations.

The company's capital now stands at a JD2 million (Al Aswaq + Al Doustour).

Sartawi denies reaching merger agreement with Bank of Jordan

** THE NEGOTIATIONS which were going on to form a merger between the Bank of Jordan and the Jordan Kuwait Bank (JKB) did not produce any agreement. JKB board chairman Sufian Sartawi said the board of the Jordan Kuwait Bank did not agree to merge with the Bank of Jordan in principle. "Negotiations actually took place at the request of Bank of Jordan but did not reach positive results," Mr. Sartawi said, adding that the JKB board has opposed the move.

This attempt was the second to merge the two banks as an announcement was made three years ago that a merger agreement has been reached but the accord was later withdrawn and totally cancelled.

Mr. Sartawi said JKB intends to raise its capital to JD20 million by capitalising reserves and retained earnings and by offering whatever amount that will still be required for a private subscription (Al Ra'i).

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"If you love fancy restaurants because they give you an extra fork for cleaning your fingernails, you know you're a slob."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Arginton

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

UBLT
SLARN
BLABED
DESMOT

WHAT YOU CAN GET OUT OF SCENTS.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: _____

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: USURY QUEST PUNDT TIDBT
Answer: What Dad created when he cooked dinner — QUITE A STIR

JORDAN TIMES
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AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179 ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (10/05/1997 - 16/05/1997) WEEKLY REPORT														
DURING THE LAST 5 WEEKS	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	LOW	HIGH	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	PERCENT	AVERAGE TURNOVER	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
257,000	J1.000 ARAB BANK	11.9	1.54	32	1208	207000	250.50	250.00	255.50	255.00	+0.50	250.00	0.27	5
1,870	1.600 JOR. NATIONAL BK.	-	0.00	39	31932	57032	1.79	1.80	1.76	1.80	-0.01	1.797	0.76	5
4,550	4.500 CACCO AMMAN BANK	9.6	3.23	5	2461	12378	4.90	4.65	4.65	4.65	-0.25	4.650	0.27	2
3,000	2.800 BANK OF JORDAN	11.1	0.00	21	13703	48486	3.00	3.10	3.00	3.07	+0.07	3.063	1.50	4
2,350	2.210 JORDANIAN BANK	8.0	7.79	10	7481	7547	2.21	2.17	2.16	2.17	-0.04	2.168	0.32	3
4,800	4.700 THE JORDANIAN BK.	14.2	4.08	43	79706	381895	4.77	4.80	4.66	4.75	-0.02	4.731	2.19	5
2,450	2.530 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	18.6	0.00	35	104851	261489	2.56	2.62	2.56	2.57	-0.01	2.522	1.94	5
1,520	1.500 JOR. GULF BANK	14.8	0.00	26	27231	21521	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	-	1.500	0.31	1
3,000	3.500 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	16.8	0.00	2	3180	10850	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	-	3.500	0.31	1
3,830	3.870 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	16.9	2.28	37	8149	29547	3.86	3.66	3.27	3.66	-0.20	3.438	0.56	5
1,420	1.530 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	80.4	0.00	2	580	693	1.33	1.36	1.26	1.26	-0.07	1.260	0.06	1
3,330	3.250 JOR. DEV. BANK	20.4	0.00	8	1097	3507	3.30	3.22	3.17	3.17	-0.13	3.197	0.11	2
1,150	1.000 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	15.00	0.00	10	4954	4853	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.001	0.23	3
1,170	1.070 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	-	0.00	22	15641	17654	1.12	1.14	1.08	1.14	+0.02	1.130	0.56	4
GRAND TOTAL														
1,740	1.730 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	4.8	11.76	2	150	355	1.73	1.70	1.70	1.70	-0.03	1.700	0.07	2
1,330	1.320 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	9.9	0.00	2	3400	4753	1.33	1.30	1.30	1.30	-0.03	1.300	0.50	1
1,950	1.850 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	7.4	5.26	1	100	180	1.85	1.80	1.80	1.80	-0.05	1.800	0.05	1
1,700	1.700 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	12.8	0.00	1	100	541	1.70	1.61	1.61	1.61	-0.09	1.610	0.10	1
INSURANCE SECTOR														
1,700	1.500 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	7.9	6.10	80	53678	98492	1.67	1.69	1.63	1.64	-0.02	1.633	3.58	5
1,300	0.900 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	11.5	1.30	4	1114	8932	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	-	0.900	0.22	2
1,450	1.380 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	7.9	0.71	1	100	137	1.38	1.32	1.32	1.32	-0.06	1.320	0.03	1
7,150	7.000 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	7.8	4.00	8	1233	715	7.15	7.15	7.15	7.15	-	7.153	0.27	1
6,420	6.250 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	20.8	2.44	5	480	1995	6.42	6.25	6.25	6.25	-0.17	6.250	0.04	1
2,400	2.340 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	13.7	0.51	1	50	138	2.34	2.34	2.34	2.34	-	2.340	0.01	1
1,120	1.000 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	17.5	0.00	10	4233	48411	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.002	1.06	5
1,000	0.700 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	11.8	7.06	4	40000	34200	0.70	0.68	0.68	0.68	-0.02	0.685	0.48	1
1,000	0.800 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	24.6	0.00	3	300	147	0.80	0.79	0.79	0.79	-0.01	0.790	0.09	2
7,250	7.100 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	12.4	7.15	2	150	1035	7.25	6.99	6.99	6.99	-0.26	6.990	0.08	1
1,240	1.130 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	19.8	0.00	10	8850	11378	1.24	1.20	1.20	1.20	-0.04	1.206	0.14	3
3,670	3.500 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	7.8	0.00	11	4700	14191	3.67	3.62	3.62	3.62	-0.05	3.623	0.64	4
1,880	1.800 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	-	0.00	23	14088	12773	1.87	1.80	1.80	1.80	-0.07	1.807	0.13	5
1,700	1.630 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	7.8	6.67	10	3750	6171	1.63	1.64	1.63	1.63	-0.01	1.646	0.79	4
SERVICES SECTOR														
3,800	3.640 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	23.2	7.93	74	36183	361449	3.78	3.77	3.72	3.75	-0.01	3.750	1.59	5
14,000	3.900 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	9.2	3.00	48	14574	478631	3.90	3.88	3.83	3.83	-0.07	3.830	3.90	4
3,500	3.490 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	24.2	2.78	67	7345	609115	3.49	3.48	3.48	3.48	-0.01	3.485	0.85	4
10,250	9.700 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	9.5	9.47	62	4952	44482	9.70	9.60	9.50	9.50	-0.20	9.503	0.77	5
6,700	6.160 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	7.3	6.32	36	241	86	6.16	6.10	6.10	6.10	-0.06	6.097	0.66	1
2,800	1.700 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	-	0.00	30	14830	13490	1.82	1.87	1.86	1.82	-0.05	1.830	0.37	5
6,450	6.500 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	10.8	2.99	8	3900	25790	6.50	6.50	6.55	6.55	+0.05	6.513	0.98	4
2,800	2.800 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	9.3	5.97	15	3617	20182	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	-	2.800	0.29	2
7,150	6.900 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	7.3	2.84	11	28150	197278	7.10	7.00	7.00	7.00	-0.10	7.095	1.17	4
2,270	2.250 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	7.6	10.86	5	336	761	2.27	2.25	2.25	2.25	-0.02	2.251	0.19	1
1,150	1.140 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	10.14	5.47	10	4075	3864	1.14	1.12	1.12	1.12	-0.02	1.114	0.22	5
1,210	1.160 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	-	0.00	10	20850	24149	1.16	1.18	1.13	1.13	-0.03	1.139	0.08	5
4,950	4.400 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	11.4	5.38	8	2900	12406	4.40	4.37	4.37	4.37	-0.03	4.373	0.68	3
1,400	1.400 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	11.2	0.00	70	7814	3864	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	-	1.401	2.88	5
1,070	1.020 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	33.3	0.00	31	13050	13864	1.02	1.09	1.02	1.09	+0.07	1.063	0.33	3
1,210	1.040 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	-	0.00	3	4000	5500	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	-	1.100	0.15	2
1,000	1.000 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	10.14	5.47	10	21600	15120	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.000	0.15	2
1,780	1.700 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	-	0.00	66	17300	12767	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	-	1.700	0.53	4
1,660	1.600 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	-	0.00	13	7241	4376	1.60	1.65	1.61	1.61	-0.04	1.622	0.43	2
2,000	2.000 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	17.2	0.00	9	3500	3388	2.00	2.05	2.00	2.00	-0.05	2.000	0.23	2
1,700	1.600 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	-	0.00	43	23450	19499	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	-	1.600	0.96	4
1,410	1.310 ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	18.1	4.93	60	26699	26021	1.31	1.45	1.41	1.42	+0.11	1.424	0.56	5
2,400	2.410 JOR. HERITAGE BANK	12.7	0.00	40	17521	26689	2.40	2.42	2.40	2.40	-0.02	2.411	0.21	5</

Bin Sulayyem wins record 7th Jordan Rally title

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Mohammad Bin Sulayyem of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Friday drove his Ford Escort Cosworth to victory in the 15th Jordan International Rally which forms the second round of the Middle East Rally Championship.

Bin Sulayyem secured his seventh Jordan Rally title finishing with a time of 2 hours 46 minutes and was closely followed by Abdullah Bakhshab of Saudi Arabia in his Toyota Celica GT4 with a time of 2:47.09.

Oman's Hamed Al Wahaibi was a distant third with a time of 3:21.15.

Mohammad Al Daoud was Jordan's top competitor finishing 4th overall with a time of 3:37.11.

Friday's win consolidated reigning eight-time Middle East champion Sulayyem's grip atop the regional championship after he won the inaugural Middle East event in the UAE followed by Bakhshab in second place.

The rallies in Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar and Dubai later this year form the remaining rounds of the championship.

His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Bin Al Hussein gave the start signal for the 800-kilometre-long rally Thursday which included 320 kilometres of 19 special stages.

Twenty-five cars started the rally on the first day which covered 11 asphalt stages in Rumman Forest, Iraq Al Amir, Mousa Springs, Mount Nebo, Mahes and the lowest point on Earth — the Dead Sea.

Organisers had cancelled asphalt stages for the past two years after considerable problems in the Jarash area in 1993 and 1994.

While winding asphalt stages forced five cars out on the first day, desert tracks on the second day proved to be the ultimate test of experience, stamina and well-maintained and sponsored teams.

Eight special stages in the south of the country took drivers through Tunaib, Daba'a, Swaqa, Hafira, and Hasa.

No Jordanian has won the rally since it started in 1981. This year too, foreign competitors again had the upper hand especially in the absence of the Kingdom's best drivers.

HRH Prince Abdullah did not take part. Jordan's Drivers Open champion Ahmad Daoud also missed the rally after fracturing his



Mohammad Bin Sulayyem of the United Arab Emirates surges through the desert outside Amman on the last stage of the two-day Jordan Rally. Bin Sulayyem, eight-times Middle East Rally champion, went on to win the Jordan Rally for a record seventh time (Reuters photo)



Dogs chase a rally car of Ron Oakley of the United Arab Emirates in the Jordanian desert during the two-day Jordan Rally (Reuters photo)

JORDAN RALLY RECORD

1981	Michel Saleh/Lebanon	Toyota Celica GT
1982	Michel Saleh/Lebanon	Toyota Celica GT
1983	Saeed Al Hajiri/Qatar	Opel Manta 400
1984	Moh'd Bin Sulayyem/UAE	Toyota Celica Turbo
1985	Saeed Al Hajiri/Qatar	Porsche 911 SCRS
1986	Saeed Al Hajiri/Qatar	Porsche 911 SCRS
1987	Moh'd Bin Sulayyem/UAE	Toyota Celica Twincam Turbo
1988	Moh'd Bin Sulayyem/UAE	Toyota Celica Twincam Turbo
1990	Moh'd Bin Sulayyem/UAE	Toyota Celica GT4
1992	Abbas Mosawi/Qatar	Toyota Celica GT4
1993	Sheikh Hamad Al Thani/Qatar	Mitsubishi Gallant VR4
1994	Moh'd Bin Sulayyem/UAE	Ford Escort RS Cosworth
1995	Abdullah Bakhshab/S. Arabia	Ford Escort Cosworth
1996	Moh'd Bin Sulayyem/UAE	Ford Escort Cosworth
1997	Moh'd Bin Sulayyem/UAE	Ford Escort Cosworth

leg. Bashur Bustami who was heavily favoured after getting a Group A car joined those who sat out the rally after the late arrival of his car and the Kingdom's top competitor in the past two international rallies, Ma'rouf Abu Samra, who was fourth last year and third in 1994, was also absent after recently moving abroad.

Organisers the Royal

Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ), also lacked a major sponsor for the event for the fourth year in its 15-year history.

Competitors represented the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Cyprus, Kuwait, Australia, Israel, Oman, Great Britain and Germany.

Fifteen drivers, including five Jordanians finished the rally.

Oman's Abdul Rahman Al Kamali was fifth, Yuval Melamed, the first Israeli

competitor in the rally finished sixth, Jordan's Ibrahim Ata Ali was seventh, followed by compatriot Alfred Shamoun in eighth place, Cypriot Nearchou Nearchos was ninth, Great Britain's Miles Pearce tenth, Saudi's Bader Diab eleventh, Jordan's Tareq Taba a twelfth, the UAE's Abdul Rahman Ghulloom thirteenth, Jordan's Bishara Quz or fourteenth and Amrik Sehmbi fifteenth.

Jazireh celebrate 1st Divison Basketball crown as Orthodoxi drop to third

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Basketball Federation has wrapped up the 1997 First Division Basketball championship and will now regroup the national teams in preparation for the Pan-Arab Games in Beirut and the Asian Championship later this year.

As Al Jazireh celebrated winning the title for the first time in 33 years after beating Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxi in both rounds, Al Ahli seemed content maintaining second place following their 85-73 win over titleholders Al

Orthodoxi 85-73. Al Ahli had also won the first round match 70-66.

With Al Orthodoxi third, Al Hussein came in fourth and Jalil fifth. Al Yarmouk were relegated to the Second Division.

Al Jazireh's players won the top three awards of the competition.

Ma'an Odeh was named best player, Husam Lutfi top offensive and Yousef Abu Bakr top defensive player.

Silver Charm gallops distance in Preakness practice

BALTIMORE (R) — Kentucky Derby winner Silver Charm galloped his usual mile and a half at Pimlico Thursday in preparation for Saturday's 122nd running of the Preakness Stakes, the middle leg of the triple crown.

"He might run better on Saturday," said exercise rider Larry Damore. "But he couldn't train any better."

Silver Charm, who drew the seventh post position Wednesday, was installed as the 9-5 morning line favourite.

The second choice at 2-1 is Captain Bodgit, a close runner-up to Silver Charm at the Derby. Captain Bodgit jogged and galloped a mile at bowie.

Trainer Gary Capuano said he had been looking for an inside post position for Saturday's race, but his horse will have to break from the ninth gate on the tight turning course.

"That's what we got. It's what we have to deal with," Capuano said.

The current third choice is free house, who finished a strong third in the Derby. Free House, with jockey Kent Desormeaux replacing David Flores in the saddle, drew the favourable fourth slot and is listed at 9-2.

Saturday's race over 1 3/16 miles will have a field of 10, six of whom did not run in the Kentucky Derby.

The best of the non-Derby starters appears to be Lexington Derby winner Touch Gold, who drew the fifth post and is listed at 5-1.

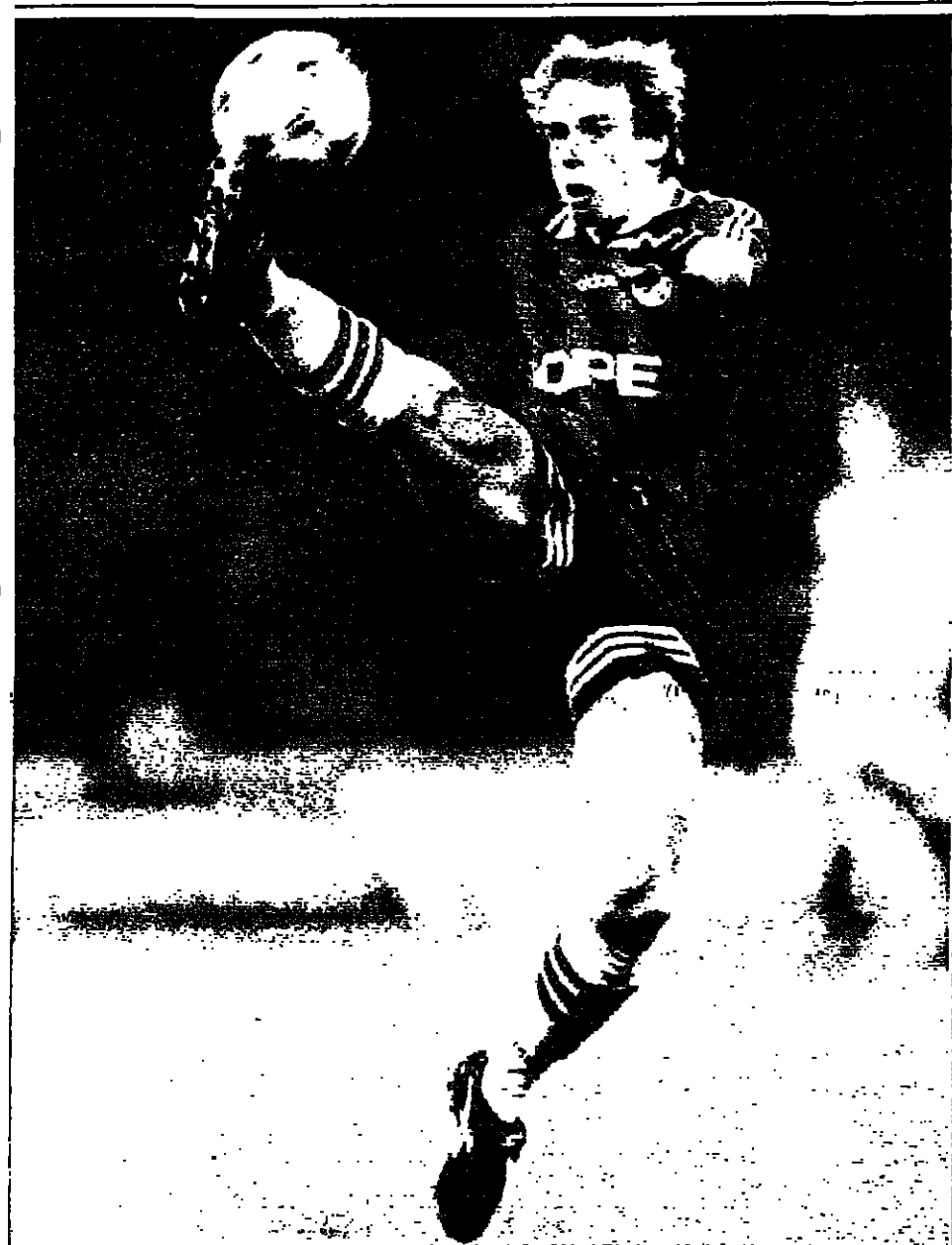
MAJOR LEAGUE RESULTS

American League

White Sox	4	Seattle	3
Kansas City	10	Detroit	9
NY Yankees	8	Texas	2
Anaheim	3	Baltimore	2
Oakland	6	Milwaukee	5

National League

Chicago Cubs	8	San Diego	2
Pittsburgh	4	Colorado	3
Los Angeles	2	Cincinnati	1
Montreal	8	San Francisco	7



Juergen Klinsmann of Bayern Munich announced on Friday in a German newspaper interview to leave Bayern Munich and to play in the next season for the Italian first soccer division club Sampdoria (Reuters photo)

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Klinsmann to play for Sampdoria

GENOA (R) — Juergen Klinsmann is to move from Bayern Munich and will play for Italian Serie A team Sampdoria next season, club director general Emiliano Salvarezza told Reuters on Friday.

Salvarezza said the club would make no further official comment on the deal until Klinsmann had finished the current season with the German League leaders.

"Klinsmann has a championship to finish. We don't want to create problems for anybody," he said. Klinsmann said earlier this season that he wanted to leave the club as he was not happy with the way he had been treated.

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SABRINA

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Sonics hold off Rockets, force deciding 7th game

SEATTLE (R) — Shawn Kemp scored 22 points and Gary Payton 19, including a key left-handed scoop shot down the stretch, as the Seattle SuperSonics held off the Houston Rockets 99-96 Thursday and forced a decisive seventh game in their Western Conference semifinal series.

Payton also had 13 assists, eight rebounds and five steals. Hersey Hawkins scored 16 points and Kemp added 11 rebounds for Seattle, which has won two straight games, setting up game 7 Saturday at Houston.

The SuperSonics are trying to become just the sixth team in playoff history to win a series after trailing 3-1.

Kemp scored 10 points and Hawkins added nine on 4-of-4 shooting as Seattle raced to a 30-13 lead in the first quarter and appeared still to have the game well in hand heading into the fourth quarter.

But the Rockets nearly erased a 22-point deficit, closing to 95-93 on a 3-pointer by Clyde Drexler with 31 seconds left before Payton reversed direction in the key to sneak past Charles Barkley and bank a left-handed layup that sealed the game with 12 seconds remaining.

"It's just natural," Payton said. "I like to go to my left and I can put it up with my left."

"He made a hell of a play," Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich said. "A left-handed scoop shot from the hip. He's a hell of a player, maybe the best point guard in the league."

Hakeem Olajuwon had 30 points and 11 rebounds and Barkley added 20 and 12 for the Rockets, who again struggled from 3-point range — 6-of-23. Houston is just 11-of-50 in the last two games.

"We can shoot the ball a lot better," said Drexler, who shot 3-of-14 from the field. "We just need to make up our minds and shoot it with confidence. We will do that in Game 7."

"We're going to win Saturday," Barkley said. "We're going to win Saturday. That's all I got to say." The Rockets have never



Houston's Clyde Drexler (R) applies defensive pressure to Seattle's Detlef Schrempf during first quarter action in Seattle. The Sonics won 99-96 to force a game seven (Reuters photo).

beaten the Sonics in five playoff series. Saturday's winner faces the Utah Jazz in the Conference finals.

The Sonics built just enough of a lead early in the game to hang on at the end.

"We just came out with a lot of energy," Payton said. "If we could play like that all the time, I think it's the best we could play. I'm supposed to come out like that. When they see me D-ing the ball up, working hard, my teammates get energized."

"The first quarter, they were running by us and you can't let a good team do that," said Rockets forward Mario Elie, who scored 18 points.

"I was extremely surprised and disappointed at our lack of aggression at

the beginning of the game," Tomjanovich said. "We missed some point-blank shots. Their momentum was like a boulder coming down the side of a mountain and we were trying to hold it back."

The Sonics led 51-37 at halftime after forcing 13 turnovers. But the Rockets finally put together a surge and closed to 66-57 on a jumper by Elie with 3:42 left in the third quarter.

Seattle immediately responded with 11 straight points.

The Sonics led 78-61 entering the fourth quarter and still held a 92-82 bulge after a Payton basket with just over four minutes to go. But Olajuwon made three straight jumpers, cutting the deficit to four points with 2:32 to play.

Schrempf made two foul shots and Kemp added one before Barkley scored inside with 1:28 remaining, pulling Houston within 95-90 as the Rockets' press bothered Seattle. Barkley and Kemp each missed before Drexler's 3-pointer set up Payton's clinching shot.

"Those were the slowest moments for a long time," Sonics coach George Karl said. "I couldn't believe we could get that tired and that tentative. We had the lead, then they trapped us and that got them back close to single digits, and then we just got tentative."

"It was a dogfight to the end," said Kemp.

The Sonics ended the road teams' four-game winning streak in the series.

Ivanisevic moves into Italian Open semifinals

ROME (AP) — Goran Ivanisevic, back from an injury and "hungry" for tennis, rolled through Scott Draper 6-4, 6-4 Friday to reach the semifinals of the Italian Open.

The big-serving Croat needed just a little over an hour to defeat the unseeded Draper, a left-handed Australian who had ousted Thomas Muster, the dominant player on clay the past two years.

The No. 6 Ivanisevic is the highest seed remaining in the \$2.3 million tournament after the top players made early exits as in the other European clay court events this season.

As he has through the tournament, Ivanisevic played steady tennis, not rushing his points.

"I'm surprised. I've been playing very well, very

patiently," Ivanisevic said.

The Croat had just returned to the Tour after injuring his hand last month.

"In the first tournaments on clay I usually don't play very well, but after five weeks off I'm hungry," Ivanisevic said.

Another interesting quarterfinal pitted No. 7 Marcelo Rios of Chile, winner of Monte Carlo and perhaps the top clay court player of the season, against Jim Courier, an Italian champion in 1992 and 1993 when he was at the height of his game.

Ivanisevic defeated Boris Becker to reach the quarters and described his play in that match as simply "Unbelievable."

And there was nothing more unbelievable than the crosscourt backhand pass-

ing shot that saved the first set and turned the momentum around.

"Unbelievable, you don't expect a shot like I played. I closed my eyes and just went for it," said the big-serving Croatian following his 7-6 (9-7) 6-3 victory over Becker.

Courier, who has slid to No. 24 in the rankings, seems to have sharpened his play here, starting with his first round elimination of the top-seeded Pete Sampras. He beat No. 15 Marc Rosset 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 in the round of 16.

Centre Court at the Foro Italico was packed for the Becker-Ivanisevic match and the fans were treated to a highly entertaining first set.

Ivanisevic saved five set points, including four in the tiebreaker.

"I was dominating the first set and had a million chances to win it," said Becker, who led 6-3 in the tiebreaker. "Then he came up with something incredible."

"In the tiebreaker, I did everything right and he ends up winning it. It's very hard to swallow."

It was further frustrating for Becker because it marked another vain attempt by the three-time Wimbledon champion to win at least one clay court tournament in his career.

Ivanisevic has returned to the Tour following a freak injury last month when he broke a finger when he closed the door of his apartment in Split, Croatia, on his hand.

Davenport heads U.S. Fed Cup team

CHESTNUT HILL, Massachusetts (R) — Olympic champion Lindsay Davenport heads a list of six players available for the U.S. team to face Japan in a Fed Cup qualifying match this summer, captain Martina Navratilova said Thursday.

Davenport, ranked fifth in the world, is joined by Mary Joe Fernandez, Kimberly Po, Chanda Rubin, Jennifer Capriati and Gigi Fernandez in the player pool.

Four of the six will be chosen for the team, which will face Japan, July 12-13 here at the Longwood Cricket Club. Choices have to be made within 10 days of the matches.

"We are putting together the best possible team for this tie and looking forward to playing at Longwood," Navratilova said in a teleconference call. "This is an extremely important match since we are playing to return to the fold next year."

Navratilova made no mention of third-ranked Monica Seles, the highest-ranking U.S. player.

The United States, winners of the Fed Cup last year, were stunned by the Netherlands 3-2 in the opening round in March and need a victory over Japan to rejoin the World Group.

Navratilova said Dutch fans were a big factor in spurring the Netherlands to a home court victory. She hopes being the home side against Japan will work in her team's favour.

"I think it is just the emotional advantage of knowing that the great majority of the people are supporting you," Navratilova said.

"They (fans) can't hit any balls for you, but it certainly provides an emotional lift. So I'm glad we are playing this one at home."

Navratilova said the tennis tradition of the Boston area should help ensure a better turnout for the matches than the Atlantic city venue, which drew a small audience at last year's final.

"I am looking forward to coming back there (Longwood) and I am looking forward to winning. I will tell you my back is against the wall if I lose this one," Navratilova said with a laugh.

"You guys (the USTA) will never hire me again for anything."

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NORTH
♠ K 8 7 4
♥ K 4 2
♦ K 10 8
♣ J 8 3

WEST
♠ J 9 2
♥ 10 8 7 3
♦ 6 4 2
♣ 9 7 6 5

EAST
♠ Q 10 6 3
♥ A
♦ 9 7 6 5
♣ Q 10 4 2

SOUTH
♠ A 5
♥ Q J 9 8 5
♦ A Q J 5
♣ A K

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
Pass Pass 10 Pass
3C Pass

Opening lead: Five of ♠

Just because a hand seems simple is no reason not to approach the play with care. At the table there is truly many a slip between the cup and the lip.

As a passed hand, North upgraded the king of hearts by a full point and, since kings are undervalued anyway in the point-count structure, judged the hand as being worth a limit raise. South got to slam by the most direct route possible.

West led a low club, and East's ten forced the ace. Since there

seemed to be no problem in the play, declarer took advantage of the fact that the first trick was won in the closed hand to lead a trump to the king. (That lost to East's ace, and a spade came back. Declarer was in a bind and led the queen of trumps. East's club discard was a mortal blow to the contract — West's ten of trumps could not be shut out as the setting trick.

Declarer should have taken time out at the first trick to plan the campaign. Obviously, there were no losers outside the trump suit, and only one there — the ace — as long as trumps were no worse than 3-2.

But what if trumps broke 4-1?

If the four trumps were with East, there would be no problem. The king and queen of trumps would reveal the position and, if the ten had not appeared from West, declarer could take a marked finesse for that card. But what if West held four trumps?

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Ewing among 6 NBA players suspended

NEW YORK (R) — Five New York Knicks including star centre Patrick Ewing were suspended one game each and Miami Heat forward P.J. Brown was hit with a two-game suspension as the NBA came down hard Thursday on offenders in Wednesday night's brawl during the teams' playoff game.

However, players association executive director Billy Hunter said he would seek a temporary restraining order Friday in U.S. District Court in New York.

The players' union maintains that the rules the NBA used to determine the punishment were not collectively bargained and therefore arbitrary. The rules were established after several incidents during the 1994 playoffs. The current collective bargaining agreement took effect last July.

Brown — who received the NBA's J. Walter Kennedy citizenship award earlier this season — bodyslammed New York backup guard Charlie Ward after he came in low to box out the Heat forward following a made free throw with 1:53 remaining in Miami's 96-81 victory.

New York reserve forward John Wallace grabbed Brown from behind and several Knicks came off the bench onto the court as a melee ensued. No punches were thrown.

Brown was fined \$10,000. Brown has claimed Ward was trying to injure his knees by going in low. Ward has said Brown pushed him down.

Ward, Ewing, Allan Houston, Larry Johnson and John Starks all were suspended one game and fined. Ward was docked \$6,000 and the other Knicks were fined \$2,500.

Ewing, Houston, Johnson and Starks were suspended for leaving the bench during an altercation.

"All of our players served as peacekeepers, and the reason they came out was to protect one of their own," Knicks president Ernie Grunfeld said. "It's sad that they have to be suspended. The reason they did it was the right reason."

"The letter of the law in the NBA is that anyone who leaves the vicinity of the bench is subject to a suspension," said Miami coach Pat Riley.

Because NBA rules require

a team to have at least nine players dressed and available to play for a playoff game, the league decided the suspensions of Ewing, Houston, Johnson and Starks would be split between two games and served in alphabetical order.

Thus Ewing and Houston, the Knicks' top two playoff scorers, would sit out game 6 in New York Friday, along with Ward, who has provided a spark coming off the bench to run the offence.

Starks and Johnson would sit out either Game 7 of the Eastern Conference semifinals in Miami, should New York lose game 6, or game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals should the Knicks, up 3-2 in the best-of-seven series, win Friday and advance to a series against the Chicago Bulls.

Starks, the NBA's sixth man award winner, scored 21 points in each of the last two games. Johnson, although a starter, has not had a major impact on the series.

Brown would not play again in the series, leaving Miami without its best offensive rebounder and a good low-post defender. If the Knicks win Game 6, Brown

would serve the second game of his suspension in next season's opener.

Suspended players would not be allowed to attend the games. "I'm going to be home. Unfortunately I can't come to the game," said Ewing. "It's going to be tough."

The penalties were announced by NBA senior Vice President Rod Thorn. Wednesday's game in Miami, in which the Heat staged off elimination with a 96-81 win, was marred by four ejections and an ugly melee in the final two minutes.

Brown, Ward and Starks were ejected following the brawl. Shortly before the scuffle, New York forward Charles Oakley had been ejected for shoving Heat centre Alonzo Mourning.

The melee, in front of the Knicks' bench, occurred as New York had mostly back-ups in the game while Miami had mostly starters on the floor.

Along with the suspensions and individual fines, the Knicks organisation was fined \$20,000 — \$5,000 for each player who left the bench area.

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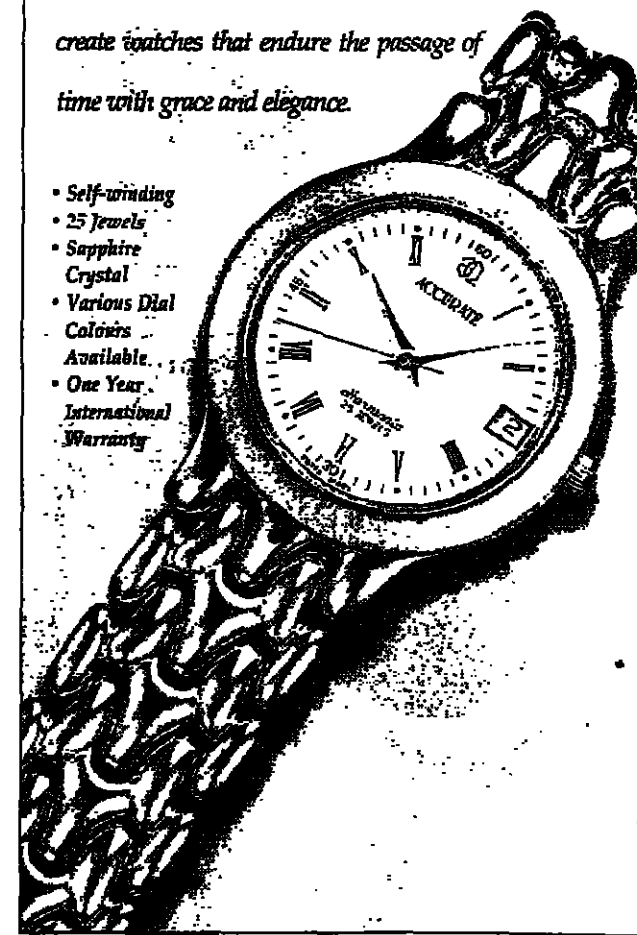
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Mobutu flees Kinshasa to the north on his way to Morocco then France

KINSHASA (R) — "He reigns but does not govern." Information Minister Kin-Kieyi Mulumba said at a news conference.

Laurent Kabila, whose rebel troops have seized most of Zaire, had refused to halt his military advance while Mr. Mobutu dallied, clinging to his office.

In other signs that Mr. Mobutu's 32-year regime was crumbling, General Nzimbi Ngale, the head of the dreaded Presidential Guard, climbed aboard a small speedboat Friday and crossed the Congo River to Brazzaville, Congo, witnesses said.

With Gen. Nzimbi gone, speculation mounted a deal had been struck with other generals to allow the rebels to enter the city peacefully.

Meanwhile, the families of Zairean soldiers further north of Kinshasa were also hurriedly crossing the river, Red Cross workers said.

Mr. Mobutu's departure followed reports that his three top generals told him they could not and would not defend the capital.

Mr. Mobutu slipped out of the capital so quietly Friday — in contrast to the usual sirens and police escort that accompany his motorcade — that many residents did not know he was gone.

The capital was calm, with markets, shops and restaurants open and the streets filled with residents. But truckloads of machine-gun toting soldiers were out in force along the road to the airport.

A Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there was a strong chance that Mr. Mobutu would flee the country today. French television station TF1 said Mr. Mobutu was going to Morocco, then on to France, where he has a villa on the Riviera. It cited no sources.

Hundreds of dependents of Zairean soldiers have crossed the Congo River into neighbouring Congo ahead of the rebel advance, Red Cross workers said Friday. At least 500 relatives trying to escape fighting at Bandundu, about 145 kilometres north of Kinshasa, have arrived in the town of Ngabe, Congo.

In addition, at least 10,000 Rwandan refugees



Zairean soldiers of the Presidential Special Division escort President Mobutu Sese Seko's motorcade mid-morning on Friday, on its way to the Kinshasa airport. Sources close to Mr. Mobutu said he flew to Gbadolite, his parent's native village, some 200 km (125 miles) north of Kinshasa, where he has a luxurious home (AFP photo)

were in the area, and up to 400 more were arriving each day, the workers said.

Mr. Kabila reiterated his demand that Mr. Mobutu resign after meetings Thursday in Cape Town, South Africa, with President Nelson Mandela and U.N. officials.

Mr. Kabila gave Mr. Mobutu a Monday deadline. The talks Thursday had been considered a last-ditch

say if the rebels did attack, they could take Kinshasa's international airport as soon as Friday night and Mr. Mobutu's soldiers would put up little resistance.

Gen. Nzimbi who fled to the Congo Friday, wore civilian clothes and was protected by about 10 armed soldiers from his division, according to the witnesses. His unit contains Zaire's elite troops and

expecting an answer from him on Monday.

Mr. Kabila left Cape Town on Friday for his headquarters in the southern Zairean city of Lubumbashi.

The South African Press Association published a proposal by Mr. Mandela that calls for Mr. Mobutu to hand over power within 24 hours to a transitional authority to run the country until elections.

Before he left, Mr. Mobutu on Thursday ordered the cremation of the body of former Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, the New York Times reported Friday. Habyarimana was killed when his plane was downed in 1994 by unidentified assailants near the Rwandan capital of Kigali. His death touched off the Hutu government-organised slaughter of at least 500,000 minority Tutsis.

The body had been brought secretly from Gbadolite to Kinshasa on Monday, the Times reported. It was not known how Zaire had obtained the body. Mr. Mobutu was a long-time supporter of Habyarimana and the two maintained close ties.

Switzerland orders freeze on Mobutu's villa

GENEVA (R) — Switzerland ordered a freeze on Friday on the villa of Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko, but not other assets of the embattled ruler, estimated to total \$4 billion by Swiss media.

"The Federal Justice Department, in accordance with the Foreign Ministry and on the basis of the request for legal assistance on May 7 from the prosecutor in Lubumbashi, has decided to freeze Mobutu's property in Savigny as a preventative measure," a government statement said.

effort to end Zaire's war without a bloody fight for Kinshasa.

Some Zaireans living near the airport, wary of being caught in the clashes, piled belongings onto their heads or into wheelbarrows and hustled closer to the city centre.

Western military sources

were considered the most likely to fight a rebel advance on the capital.

After their meeting Thursday, Mr. Mandela and Mr. Kabila suggested the next move was Mr. Mobutu's. "We... made a set of proposals to him which he took back to Kinshasa," Mr. Mandela said. "We are

U.S. demands action on Bashiti's killing; two Palestinians arrested

AMMAN (J.T.) — The U.S. on Thursday demanded that those responsible for killing a Palestinian suspected of selling Arab land to Israelis be brought to justice and said that it condemns "in the strongest possible terms" if it was proven that the Palestine National Authority (PNA) officially endorsed such action.

"There has been a murder, a savage murder, and the people who committed the murder ought to be brought to justice" told the State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns.

"There can be no place for threats, public threats against civilians or anyone else in the Middle East at this time. That's a very important message that we have communicated to the Palestinian Authority, to many of their officials," Mr. Burns added.

Earlier Thursday, Israeli police arrested a Palestinian police officer and a woman for suspected involvement in the murder of an east Jerusalem resident accused of selling land to Israelis.

The victim, 70-year-old land dealer Farid Bashiti, was found dead a week ago in the Palestinian-controlled city of Ramallah, his skull crushed, hands tied behind his back and mouth sealed with plastic tape.

Israeli authorities have accused the Palestinian Security Forces of complicity in the murder. Bashiti was killed just days after Palestinian Justice Minister Fehi Abu Midien said Palestinians caught selling land to Israelis would face the death penalty.

"We view it with great concern, with great gravity, that the Palestinian Authority issued an edict that said anyone selling land to Jews would be executed — and then apparently proceeded to murder a resident of Jerusalem," Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu told reporters.

"It is something we cannot accept. It is something we protest vehemently against, and it is something we will take measures to prevent recurring. We expect to see a change of policy," Mr. Netanyahu said.

In a fax sent to the Jordan Times on Thursday, the New York-based Human Rights Watch, an American non-governmental organisation monitoring observance of internationally recognised human rights, urged President Yasser Arafat to take steps in order to avoid a repeat of the killing in the future.

The group asked President Arafat to "retract Mr. Abu Midien's announcement that the death penalty will apply to persons who sell land to Israelis, condemn the killing of Mr. Bashiti, order a thorough investigation to identify... and prosecute the culprits, and publicly repudiate Mr. Abu Midien's statements that denigrate the Palestinian judicial system by appearing to encourage Palestinian security forces and citizens to execute summarily persons suspected of selling Palestinian land to Israelis."

One of the two Palestinians arrested Thursday, Nadia Dabash, is suspected of luring Bashiti to a meeting at the Ambassador Hotel in east Jerusalem on the day of his death. They were seen leaving the hotel together, Jerusalem police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby said.

Ms. Dabash, 33, appeared in the Jerusalem magistrates court on Thursday and was ordered detained for 11 days.

The other suspect, Palestinian police officer Nasser Aladein, was ordered held for a week. Ben-Ruby would not disclose the accusations against Mr. Aladein, who works for the Ramallah

police department. No charges have been filed against either Ms. Dabash or Mr. Aladein.

"I am innocent," Mr. Aladein said as he entered the Jerusalem police station.

Ms. Dabash would not speak to reporters, but her brother, who would not give his name, told the Associated Press his sister was "innocent of all charges and came to the police station voluntarily."

Sheikh Akrema Sabri, the chief Muslim cleric in Jerusalem, declared Bashiti an infidel for selling the land and told his family that he could not be buried in a Muslim cemetery.

Bashiti's family said Israeli police first demanded that they bury the victim in Jerusalem's old city, in a direct challenge to Sheikh Sabri's ruling. The Israelis offered the family police protection.

"The Israelis are demanding that we bury my uncle in Jerusalem so they can spark strife in the Muslim community," said Assem Bashiti, the victim's nephew. He said the family would not allow Israel to force them into a confrontation with Muslim authorities.

Mr. Bashiti said the family had wanted to bury the victim in Jaffa, an Arab city in Israel, but were forbidden to do so by Israeli police.

"They told us they did not want trouble with the Muslims in Jaffa and said either we buried him in Jerusalem or nowhere," he said.

Later Thursday, police said Bashiti would be buried in a cemetery in Nabi Moussa, in the West Bank desert east of Jerusalem.

But Assem Bashiti said the family would not bury the body unless they could decide where.

Mother of Rabin's killer petitions Israeli high court

TEL AVIV (AP) — The mother of Yitzhak Rabin's assassin has asked the supreme court to prosecute a right-wing agitator she claims persuaded her son to kill the prime minister, a court official said Friday.

Israeli newspapers have reported that the agitator, Avishai Raviv, was an informant for Israel's secretive Shin Bet security service, a charge denied by Raviv. Raviv and Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir, moved in the same extremist circles in

the months leading up to the November 1995 killing of the prime minister at a Tel Aviv peace rally.

Shin Bet reportedly asked Raviv during that time to get information on Amir because of his anti-Arab statements and involvement in organising extreme-right demonstrations.

Amir's mother, Geula, petitioned the supreme court on Thursday to prosecute Raviv, said court spokesman Moshe Goral. Geula said in the petition

that many people have testified that Raviv conspired to assassinate Rabin and finally coaxed her son to commit the murder, the daily Haaretz said.

Geula also said Raviv should be charged with failing to prevent her son from carrying out the assassination.

Yigal Amir is serving a life sentence for killing Rabin. A brother of the assassin, Hagai, was convicted of conspiracy in the shooting.

2 weeks into office, Blair sets hot pace

LONDON (R) — In his first two weeks in office, British Prime Minister Tony Blair has set a cracking pace that has left sceptics flat-footed and won the grudging admiration of his political opponents.

Mr. Blair's Labour Party ran for election on a minimalist platform that made many Britons doubt they would notice much of a change if they threw out the Conservatives after 18 years of unbroken rule.

Two weeks on, few can be in any doubt that Mr. Blair meant it when he insisted during the campaign that, despite tough budget constraints, he could quickly make a difference.

From handing the Bank of England (central bank) power over interest rates to mending fences with Britain's European partners, from putting human rights at the heart of its foreign policy to modernising parliament, Mr. Blair's government has rung in the changes.

"We will not put right the damage of 18 years in 18 days, or even in 18 months, but in 12 days we have already shown how we can make a start and make a difference," Mr. Blair told parliament Wednesday as it debated his initial legislative programme.

"We have started as we mean to go on: Offering leadership and setting the agenda, rather than having it set for us."

The agenda for the next 18 months, read for him at the official opening of parliament by Queen Elizabeth, combines a start on long-term educational and welfare reforms with a raft of abrupt constitutional changes such as the establishment of a parliament in Scotland and an assembly in Wales.

If implemented, the new policies would transform the British political landscape.

"If a week is a long-time in politics, a fortnight is an eternity," the Financial Times commented Thursday. "Glancing at the queen's speech, one could also spare a blush for those who said not long ago there was nothing to choose between the two main par-

ties."

The symbols of change have not been neglected either. At Mr. Blair's insistence, ministers at cabinet meetings call each other by their first names and not by their titles.

And as the queen rode in her gilded carriage to the state opening of parliament, Mr. Blair deliberately opted to stroll there with his wife Cherie through the warm spring sunshine.

The euphoria of power will wear off as mistakes and unpredictable events test the strong, centralised grip that Mr. Blair and an inner circle of ministers have taken on the government machine.

But for now there is a buzz of excitement among Labour's 419 members of parliament, many of them fresh-faced and wide-eyed, that is in dramatic contrast with the grim struggle for survival that marked the final months of the Conservative government.

Former Prime Minister John Major, his rump of 164 MPs now squabbling over who should replace him as leader, made little attempt this week to hide his admiration for Mr. Blair's overwhelming mandate, though he entreated him not to abuse it.

"I understand the attractiveness, having achieved such a significant success in the general election, of moving speedily on many fronts," Mr. Major told Mr. Blair Wednesday.

The pace is unlikely to slacken in the weeks ahead, with a visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton and a crucial European Union summit looming large.

But it is the shape of Labour's crucial first budget, due by July, that could determine how long Mr. Blair's honeymoon lasts.

"The government has made a strong start. But the politics of celebration and gesture is coming to an end. Awkward and painful decisions will soon have to be taken," political analyst Peter Riddell wrote in The Times.

U.N. official starts round of talks in Cyprus

NICOSIA (R) — A senior United Nations official began a round of discussions in Cyprus on Thursday to put the finishing touches to preparations for direct talks on a political settlement to the conflict dividing the island.

Sir Kieran Prendergast, under secretary-general for political affairs, said he had "very valuable" talks with President Glafcos Clerides, the Greek-Cypriot leader, but refused to disclose details.

"These will be helpful in the advice which I will have to give to the secretary-general when I get back to New York," Mr. Prendergast told reporters after meeting Mr. Clerides for an hour in the Cypriot capital Nicosia.

The U.N. official was scheduled to meet Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash who heads a breakaway state in the north recognised only by Ankara later on Thursday.

If the talks do get off the ground, it would be the first known encounter of Mr. Clerides and Mr. Denktash for nearly three years.

Mr. Prendergast, who arrived on Wednesday, is expected to report back to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the outcome

of his talks, which centred around the agenda of the planned high-level meeting, diplomatic sources said.

Mr. Annan is expected to issue invitations to the two leaders at the end of May for the talks in June aimed at reuniting the island under a federal system — a goal that has eluded the U.N. for more than two decades.

It was unclear whether Mr. Prendergast planned further meetings with the leaders of the two communities during his stay on the island. On Friday he is scheduled to have meetings with the ambassadors of the European Union (EU) and

the permanent five Security Council members in Cyprus.

Turkey invaded northern Cyprus in 1974 in response to a brief Greek-Cypriot coup engineered by the military junta ruling Athens at the time.

Peace efforts suffered a serious setback last year after the killings of four Greek-Cypriots by Turks or Turkish-Cypriots along the U.N. patrolled buffer zone separating the two communities, and the fatal shooting of a Turkish-Cypriot sentry and the wounding of another.

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Israeli ambassador urges harsh protest over alleged wiretapping

TEL AVIV (AP) — The Israeli ambassador in Washington accused the United States of tapping the phones of Israeli officials and demanded in a letter published Friday that his government take harsh action.

"The Americans are wiretapping us, intercepting our conversations. This can not be considered a friendly act," Ambassador Eliyahu Ben-Elissar wrote to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"If we do not respond in a harsh fashion we will look as if it doesn't matter to us and we are willing to bend," Mr. Ben-Elissar wrote in the letter, published in the daily Yedioth Ahronot.

Last week, the Washington Post reported that the FBI was investigating whether a senior U.S. official has been passing sensitive information to the Israeli government. The inquiry

reportedly stemmed from an intercepted conversation between two Israeli intelligence officials in Washington and Tel Aviv.

Israeli officials denied the report, insisting Israel does not spy on its American ally.

As a result of the Washington Post report, Israeli newspapers speculated that the United States was tapping phone calls and deciphering Israeli intelligence codes.

U.S. officials have declined to comment.

Mr. Ben-Elissar recommended that Mr. Netanyahu summon the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, and protest the alleged wiretapping and FBI investigation.

The issue of Israeli intelligence gathering in the United States has been especially sensitive since former U.S. Navy analyst Jonathan Pollard was

caught in 1985 of passing military secrets to Israel. Pollard is serving a life sentence.

Israeli leaders have maintained that Pollard's handlers were rogues and that the operation had no official sanction, but the affair strained Israeli-U.S. relations.

Mr. Ben-Elissar wrote in Friday's letter that Israel must not become overly defensive because of Pollard.

"We cannot continue to behave as if the Pollard affair — in which we were guilty — has branded us with the mark of Cain and will prevent us forever from putting forth the truth to the Americans, also when they are guilty," Mr. Ben-Elissar wrote.

Yedioth said that Mr. Netanyahu had not yet decided on how to respond to the letter.

Mr. Netanyahu's spokesmen were not immediately available to respond.



Singapore teenager punished for smoking

SINGAPORE (R) — A 16-year-old Singapore boy has been sent to a boys' home for two years for being caught with cigarettes for the fourth time, the Straits Times newspaper said on Friday. Chief Justice Yong Pung How dismissed the apprentice technician's appeal against a juvenile court order made under a law that bans anyone under 18 from smoking, buying or possessing cigarettes. The newspaper said the boy, who could not be named because he is underage, had previously been warned or fined small amounts for being caught with cigarettes. It said the boy was among 29 sent to a boys' home, where the regime is similar to an army camp, over the past three years for similar offences. The newspaper quoted the boy's father as saying he thought the sentence harsh. "It is not as if my son was taking drugs or stealing. What teenager does not get a little naughty?" it quoted the father as saying.

Clinton to apologise to medical research victims

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton is to formally apologise on Friday to black men whose syphilis went untreated for decades as part of a U.S. government study. Five of the eight living survivors of the U.S. Public Health Service study, which began in Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1932 and lasted for 40 years, will attend the White House ceremony. The government medical experiment involved 400 black men who were left untreated for syphilis even though penicillin became widely available during the study. Survivors have been financially compensated, but there has never been a government apology. "It's something that the victims and their families and the residents of Macon County, Alabama, will appreciate and have indeed sought. And the president thinks it's most warranted to give," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said.

Tabloid newspaper to fight Eddie Murphy's lawsuit

LOS ANGELES (R) — A tabloid newspaper said on Thursday it will fight a lawsuit brought against it by comedian Eddie Murphy alleging it printed lies about his sexual tastes. The National Enquirer printed the article after Murphy was stopped by undercover police with a transsexual prostitute in his vehicle. The Enquirer said in a statement it stood by its story and would not "tolerate this legal attack." Murphy filed two lawsuits in Los Angeles Superior Court on Wednesday, seeking \$5 million in general damages and unspecified punitive damages each from the National Enquirer and the Globe tabloid paper for slander, libel and invasion of privacy. The tabloids printed interviews with transsexual prostitutes suggesting Murphy had a "secret sex life" and a "sick obsession." The Enquirer's statement said television personality Geraldo Rivera taped a show on Wednesday for later airing in which he interviewed a number of transsexuals who claimed to have had sex with Murphy.